

## Prologue-When Everything Fell to Pieces

Dumbledore's Office, Hogwarts- July 19, 1981

"I don't understand," Lily Potter whispered, staring at the old wizard sitting across from her. She was a pretty woman, in her early twenties, and normally the the soft red-velvet couch trimmed with gold on which she sat was comfortable and relaxing, but at the moment, it felt rough against her now sweaty skin. Next to her sat a dark haired man-her husband- with their one-year old daughter in his lap. In contrast to his normally mellow behavior, his back was rigid and he had a firm grip on his baby girl.

"A prophecy," repeated the old man, "Has been made regarding the fate of the wizarding world and the war-"

"Yes," snapped the black haired man, hazel eyes flashing behind horn-rimmed glasses, "We understand that. What we don't understand is what this has to do with us, Dumbledore."

"It has everything to do with you, James," Dumbledore replied calmly, meeting James's heated gaze with his cool blue-eyes."Or rather, your daughter."

"You can't possibly be suggesting," said another man, this time with sandy brown hair and golden eyes, who was standing tensely next to the couch on which the couple sat, "That a one year old baby girl is going to defeat one of the darkest and most powerful wizards we've ever seen?"

"I do not pretend, Remus," said Dumbledore, "To fully understand how it will happen, but I do know that it will."

"Perhaps," said a fourth man with aristocratic features, leaning against one of the walls of the round room filled with various trinkets of unknown functions, "It would help us if we heard the prophecy."

Professor Albus Dumbledore calmly regarded the five people (four adults and one baby) in front of him. The day before had started out normally enough. He had gone to an interview for the new position for a Divination teacher at the school, and had determined the woman to be a fraud, when she made a very real, very important prophecy. As soon as he had figured out whom the prophecy had

been referring, he had called these five to his office. He had also summoned for sixth, Peter Pettigrew, who was unable to make it due to his sick mother.

Now, they were in his office at Hogwarts School for Witchcraft and Wizardry. The room was round and, while it was cluttered, it was not messy. Different magical objects were located on the shelves of the room. Some had been gifts, others were things that the old wizard had found on his different travels. Even others were things Dumbledore himself had made.

This was not, of course, the first time the adults had been in this room. James, Sirius, and Remus had spent many hours being lectured by Dumbledore for their many (and often ingenious) pranks. Lily's time spent here was usually due to her unparalleled intelligence and motivation as a student.

"It would be unwise," He said, suddenly moving from behind the dark-wood desk, where he had been sitting, to the front of it, "Given the circumstances, to tell you the prophecy word-for-word, Sirius."

Sirius opened his mouth to protest, when Lily cut in.

"But you can give us the gist of it, right Professor Dumbledore?"

"Yes," Dumbledore nodded, "I ca-"

He was cut off by a small voice coming from James' lap. Apparently, baby Harriet had grown bored of the proceedings and wanted the attention back on her.

"Dubble-door!" She gurgled, reaching out towards the elderly wizard.  
"Dubble-door! Up! Up!"

Understanding what she wanted, Dumbledore chuckled as he picked up the eager toddler from her father's lap. Giggling happily, she snuggled into his deep-blue robes before seizing one of his hands to examine his sparkly rings. Dumbledore's eyes twinkled as he gazed upon the little girl, before looking back up at the adults.

"Where was I?"

"You were telling us about the prophecy," snapped Sirius, irritated. Dumbledore paid no attention to his tone.

"Ah! Yes!" Dumbledore's eyes turned serious once again. "The prophecy states that a child will be born at the end of July to parents who have thrice defended themselves against Voldemort." The adults all flinched at the name, but Dumbledore continued. "It goes on to say that this child alone will have the power to defeat the Dark Lord."

"How can you be sure that the prophecy is referring to Harriet?" demanded James, "Neville was born only one day before Harriet, and his parents have also gone up against Voldemort three times, as well!"

"That is true," Dumbledore agreed, "However, the prophecy is gender specific. And as Neville is a boy, he can not be the one the prophecy is describing. It must be your daughter."

Silence rang across the room. The only sound was that of Fawkes, Dumbledore's magnificent phoenix, as he chose that moment to burst into flames. The wizards in the room jumped slightly, but the tension of the room was not gone. Even baby Harriet seemed to understand the seriousness of the situation, for her eyes watered and she let out a small whimper.

"Oh no," whispered Lily, taking her daughter from the professor, "We aren't going to let anything happen to you." Lily gently rocked Harriet until she calmed down. "We are going to protect you."

"Lily is right," said Remus, talking not just to Harriet, but everybody, "Nothing is going to happen to Harriet. We are going to protect her. Thankfully, You-Know-Who doesn't know about the prophecy-" He trailed off as he saw Dumbledore's solemn expression. Sirius noticed it as well.

"He doesn't know, does he?" Sirius questioned, his worry showing on his face. Everybody turned to the headmaster.

"I am afraid that he knows of the prophecy, although he may not know of its full contents. I believe that one of his spies overheard Sybil and I talking." Dumbledore continued, "Thankfully, he only managed to hear the beginning before being thrown out of the pub."

"So..." James trailed off.

"Voldemort has most likely already heard about the prophecy," Dumbledore informed the group, "And, if I were to guess, is already plotting a way to stop it."

"He won't get near her!" yelled James, leaping to his feet. "He won't get near Harriet! There has to be some way to protect her!"

"I have been considering several charms and enchantments that could be used in a case such as this and have come to a conclusion."

"And?" Lily prompted Dumbledore.

"The Fidelius Charm."

"The Fidelius Charm?" Questioned James, "Do you think that would work?"

"I see no reason why it shouldn't," Dumbledore answered. "I would also like to offer myself up as your secret keeper... if you wish to go through with it."

"Of course we will!" Exclaimed James as Lily nodded, "But Sirius will be our secret keeper."

Lily and Sirius both nodded in agreement, however Dumbledore looked apprehensive.

"Are you sure," he said slowly, "that that is a good idea? Somebody within the Order is passing information to Voldemo-" James cut him off.

"Are you suggesting," He said slowly, "That Sirius-" This time James was cut off by Sirius.

"I would never!" Sirius exclaimed, radiating anger, "I would die before I passed information to that- that-" Sirius stuttered, unable to come up with a word that would adequately describe Voldemort.

"I apologize for offending you," Dumbledore said sincerely, "However, these are dark times. Sirius can be your Secret Keeper, if you wish, but only if you are sure."

"I would trust Sirius with my life."

Dumbledore nodded in agreement.

But would you trust him with your daughter's life? Dumbledore thought to himself.

From the ashes, Fawkes was reborn, ugly and grey and featherless.

Harriet giggled.

Lily and James's House, Godric's Hollow-July 21, 1981

Several days later, Lily and James Potter sat in their living room waiting for Sirius's arrival. After days of planning, they were ready to perform the Fidelius Charm. The charm was designed to conceal a person's location. Only one person would be able to give the location to another, but only willingly. Veritaserum (truth serum) would not work, although torture might.

The group had decided to perform the charm themselves- therefore involving as few people as possible. Dumbledore, Remus, and Peter all knew the charm was being enacted tonight, but would not be here to witness it. Harriet was upstairs asleep, unaware of what was going on.

The tense silence in the house was suddenly broken by a whooshing sound as green fire appeared in the fire place. Out of the fire stepped an unsmiling Sirius followed by...

"Peter?" Asked James. Turning to Sirius, "What is he doing here? We agreed-"

"I know," Sirius stated, "But I had an idea. Everybody who knows us knows that you would pick me to be your secret keeper. But nobody would expect for you to pick Peter to be your secret keeper."

At this, Peter, who was a short, chubby, and twitchy man with watery eyes and overly-large teeth, gave a small smile, but remained silent.

"You want us to switch secret keepers?" Lily demanded, an odd combination of anger at Sirius for being so reckless and awe that he would be willing to put his life on the line for them in such a way filling her. "But not tell anyone? Do you have any idea how much danger that would put you in?"

"It doesn't matter," said Sirius solemnly, "As long as Harriet is safe."

James turned to Peter.

"Would you be willing to do this for us?"

"As long as Harriet is safe," He repeated Sirius's words, his squeaky, high pitched voice an odd contrast to Sirius's deep velvet. James wouldn't see it now, but looking back he would realize that the words didn't sound as sincere as when Sirius spoke them.

"Are we going to tell Remus and Dumbledore?" Posed Lily.

"I don't think we should," mused James. Seeing Lily's shocked expression, he added "The less people involved, the better and Remus has been acting odd, as of late."

"If you are suggesting that Remus-"

"I don't know what to think anymore, Lily," sighed James, not letting her finish. Even the thought that one of his friends was giving information to Voldemort pained him, as did the act of suspecting them. "Remus is one of my best friends and I hate even imagining him to be working for Voldemort-" Peter squeaked- "but this is Harriet's life on the line and I don't want to take any chances."

Sirius nodded in agreement. Lily assented and the four began.

By the end of the night, the charm was in place.

Lily and James' House, Godric's Hollow- Halloween, 1981

Chris Evans and his wife Rose watched as their grand-daughter sat, giggling, on the floor playing with the plush dog her godfather had given her. At fifteen months old, Harriet had to be one of the happiest and most loved baby girls in the world. Her parents made

sure that she had everything she needed to grow and be healthy. Sirius, her godfather, along with Remus and Peter, her "uncles," loved to spoil her. All three would spend countless hours with her, telling her stories of their adventures at school and playing with her favorite toys.

Today, however, Lily and James had been persuaded by their friends to go out. They were both a bit wary, but with the Fidelius Charm in place, there wasn't much more they could do. Harriet's grandparents had been drafted for babysitting duty- not that they minded. They loved their granddaughter.

"Do you think Lily and James are having a good time?" Rose asked her husband, as she leaned against his side on the couch. The fireplace was roaring quietly, shedding its warmth and casting a soft glow across the room.

"I hope so. They deserve it." Lily and James had left for dinner a few hours ago and would be back soon.

"Yes," Rose agreed, "They do. It is a shame Peter couldn't join us tonight. I feel so bad about his mother." Chris simply nodded.

"Are you alright?"

"I'm fine," Chris said finally, "Just an odd feeling"

The couple was silent once again as they watched the little girl play with her toys, none of them unaware of the danger they were in.

Sirius Black, Peter's Flat- Halloween, 1981

Sirius Black wandered down the street that same night. As he walked, he passed dozens of muggle children in costume: fairies, goblins, mermaids, vampires, werewolves, wizards and witches.

All horribly inaccurate, he mused. He was currently heading to the flat of his friend Peter. He had finished his work for the Order a bit early, and decided to see if Peter needed any help with his mother. Peter had been acting oddly these past few months, but Sirius simply assumed that it was because of his mother's ailment.

Walking up the flight of stairs to the third floor of the building, he padded across the dirty green carpet of the hallway, until he finally reached the white door with "3B" painted on with cracked gold paint. He knocked.

Silence.

Sirius frowned and knocked again, harder.

"Peter?" He called, knocking more urgently. "Petter? C'mon Peter! Open the door!"

When there was still no response, Sirius took a few steps backward and kicked the door down. He took a step into the foyer of the small flat.

"Peter?" He called out once again, but here no answer. Looking around the grungy apartment, Sirius realized there was no sign of Peter or his mother. In fact, there was no sign of anybody living there. Walking into what seemed to be the bedroom, Sirius got the distinct impression that somebody had left the flat in a hurry: drawers were wide open, clothes were flung everywhere, and chairs were overturned.

Sirius's eyes widened in horror as he came to a realization: Peter's odd behavior...him lying about his mother... his eagerness to be the Potter's Secret Keeper... Dumbledore's suspicions of a mole...or in this case, a rat, Sirius concluded.

"Merlin's Beard," He whispered to himself, before hurrying towards Godric's Hollow.

Sirius Black, Lily and James's House, Godric's Hollow-Halloween, 1981

Sirius parked his motorbike and gazed at what was left of the Potter house. The entire house was in shambles and looked to be badly burned. Throat dry, he walked carefully through the wreckage of the house.

Rose... Chris...Lily...James... Harriet... Tears welled up in his eyes and he blinked them away. It would do no good to cry now.



"Sirius!" Came a gruff voice behind him. Turning his head, Sirius recognized the large build of Hagrid, the gamekeeper of the school. Wondering how he hadn't seen him before, Sirius made his way over to his old friend.

"Hagrid! What are you doing here? What happened? Are Rose and Chris...?"

"Rose and Chris were killed by You-Know-Who." Hagrid said gruffly, holding back tears.

"And Harriet?" Sirius asked frantically.

"Some 'ow- And I don' know 'ow-she lived. Got 'er right 'ere." He gestured to the small bundle in his arms. Sirius, hands shaking, pulled the blanket away from her face, and let out a sigh of relief when he saw his goddaughter. She was upset and tired, but looked alright. Except for a small lightning shaped mark on her forehead. He took his finger and gingerly wiped the blood from the wound.

"Is that where-?" He stopped, suddenly unable to form the words.

"That's where the curse 'it 'er" Hagrid nodded, his whiskery beard brushing against Harriet's face, making her snuffle. "It just...bounced off 'er an' 'it You-Know-Who. Destroyed 'im, destroyed the house, but she's a'wright."

"Lily and James!" Sirius exclaimed, his best friends coming to mind, "Do they know?"

"Ah..." Hagrid looked uneasy, "They know... They came 'ome just as You-Know-Who tried to kill 'arriet. Got 'it with a bit o' the spell and the 'ouse came down on 'em... But they're alive! Been taken to St. Mungo's." Hagrid added upon seeing that Sirius was on the verge of panic.

Taking a few deep breaths to calm down, he looked up at Hagrid.

"Give her to me, Hagrid. I'm her godfather...I'm the one who is supposed to take care of her if something happened to Lily and-" He cut off again, unable to say his best friend's name.

"Normally, Sirius, I would be more than 'appy to give 'er to ya, but Dumbledore told me to bring 'er straight to 'im."

Sirius frowned, but nodded. He know how much Hagrid respected the headmaster and knew that he had no chance of convincing Hagrid to give him his goddaughter.

"Alright. But take my motorbike," Sirius said, leading Hagrid to the bike in question. "It's enchanted to fly and should get you there faster."

Hagrid nodded his thanks and clambered on.

"Good-bye Sirius." He said. "I 'spect I'll be seein' you soon."

"I suspect you will."

At that, Hagrid took off, leaving Sirius standing in the wreckage of his best friend's house. Alone, the feelings Sirius had worked so hard to keep down worked their way up: anger, sadness, fear... but most of all, guilt. If he had gone ahead and been their secret keeper as planned, none of this would've happened. Hadn't it been his idea to use Peter as a secret keeper?

Peter.

Suddenly, all of Sirius's guilt turned to hatred. This was all Peter's fault. Not his. Not James'. Not Dumbledore's. Peter's. And Peter would pay. Sirius would make sure of it...even if it was the last thing he ever did.

And with a pop, Sirius disappeared.

Remus Lupin, St. Mungo's- Sept. 1, 1981

Remus Lupin sat in one of the waiting chairs at St. Mungo's, head in his hands. How could his life turn around so quickly? Just the night before, he had amazing friends, a wonderful 'niece,' and everything was going well. He had been happier than he ever believed he could be, considering his condition. Now, two of his best friends were lying in hospital beds, nobody sure when they would wake; his other best friend was dead... killed by a man whom he believed to be his brother in all ways but blood.

It was all over the papers, of course. That was how he had learned. He had gone away for his transformation, only to come back and see a paper with the headline :

"POTTERS DEAD? BLACK IN AZKABAN! YOU-KNOW-WHO GONE! ALL HAIL THE GIRL-WHO LIVED!"

At first, he had believed it to be a terrible mistake, but Dumbledore had confirmed it: Rose and Christ were killed by Voldemort. Harriet survived, but Lily and James lay dying.

And Sirius.

Sirius had betrayed them to You-Know-Who. He was their secret keeper, after all. Then, to make things worse, he had gone after Peter. He blew up Peter (leaving nothing but his finger) along with thirteen other muggles.

After being assured that Harriet was safe at her Aunt and Uncle's, he had hurried to St. Mungo's and had now been waiting for over two hours.

Guilt racked over him like a tidal wave. Perhaps, if he wasn't a werewolf, he could have been there to help James and Lily and to protect Peter, but Dumbledore had asked him to take on a special assignment underground-literally. He was to work on infiltrating the society of werewolves and see if there was any chance of getting them to come to the Light. He sighed. It was at times like these that he hated being a werewolf. If only he had been more cautious as a child and hadn't been bitten...

"Remus Lupin?"

A young healer called his name and broke him out of his thoughts. His head snapped up and his eyes fixed on a stout woman, who was the healer.

"Yes?" His voice came out croaky.

"You are here regarding Lily and James Potter?" Remus nodded.

"They are currently in a recovery room down on the fourth floor. They were treated for burns, bruises, and a few broken bones from when their house... er... collapsed. Thankfully, they didn't get home until after the curse that He-Who-Shall-Not-Be-Named performed was cast, and they didn't get the full blast of it."

"Are they going to be okay?"

The healer hesitated before answering.

"All of their external injuries are healed, but they aren't awake yet. From what we can see, there is no brain damage, but for some reason they are still unconscious. The other healer's can't find anything wrong with them."

"So," Remus choked out, "They might never wake up?"

"There is still a possibility," the middle-aged witch told him, grey eyes boring into his own. "Like I said, there was no brain damage and their vitals are fine. However, as there is nothing wrong with them, the healer's can't think of a reason why they aren't conscious yet. It could just take time."

"Can I see them?"

"Come with me," She said briskly. He got up and followed her, matching her quick pace, slightly surprised at how fast her legs could carry her. Neither said anything as they walked.

"Here you are," She said calmly, stopping in front of a door. Opening it, Remus found himself in a small, clean room. The walls were painted a plain (and ugly) green color and there was only one small window. It would have been rather dismal if it weren't for the fact that the room was filled with flowers.

Lily and James were-no are- well loved.

He drew up a chair and sat down. He would wait as long as he needed to. They had to wake up. They had to.

## Harriet Potter Year 1: Life, Death, and Rebirth

"Because things are the way they are, things will not stay the way they are".

~Bertolt Brecht

Harriet Potter, 4 Privet Drive, Little Whinging Surrey-April, 1991

Nearly ten years had passed since that night, when the Potter's were killed and Harriet had been deposited at her Aunt and Uncle's house. The Dursleys had woken up to find their niece on the front step, but Privet Drive had hardly changed at all since then. Only the photographs on the mantelpiece really showed how much time had passed. Ten years ago, there had been lots of pictures of what looked like a large pink beach ball wearing different-colored bonnets — but Dudley Dursley was no longer a baby, and now the photographs showed a large blond boy riding his first bicycle, on a carousel at the fair, playing a computer game with his father, being hugged and kissed by his mother. The room held no sign at all that another child lived in the house, too.

Yet Harriet Potter was still there, asleep at the moment, but not for long. Her Aunt Petunia was awake and it was her shrill voice that made the first noise of the day.

"Up! Get up! Now!"

Harriet woke with a start. Her aunt rapped on the door again.

"Up!" she screeched. Harry heard her walking toward the kitchen and then the sound of the frying pan being put on the stove. She rolled onto her back and tried to remember the dream she had been having. It had been a good one. There had been a flying motorcycle in it. She had a funny feeling she'd had the same dream before.

Her aunt was back outside the door.

"Are you up yet?" she demanded.

"Nearly," said Harriet.

"Well, get a move on, I want you to look after the bacon. And don't you dare let it burn, I want everything perfect on Duddy's birthday."

Harriet groaned.

"What did you say?" her aunt snapped through the door.

"Nothing, nothing..."

Dudley's birthday — how could she have forgotten? Harriet got slowly out of bed and started looking for socks. She found a pair under her bed and, after pulling a spider off one of them, put them on. Harriet was used to spiders, because the cupboard under the stairs was full of them, and that was where she slept.

When she was dressed she went down the hall into the kitchen. The table was almost hidden beneath all Dudley's birthday presents. It looked as though Dudley had gotten the new computer he wanted, not to mention the second television and the racing bike. Exactly why Dudley wanted a racing bike was a mystery to Harriet, as Dudley was very fat and hated exercise — unless of course it involved punching somebody. Dudley, who wasn't above hitting girls, often used Harriet as his punching bag. Thankfully, he couldn't often catch her. Harriet didn't look it, but she was very fast.

Perhaps it had something to do with living in a dark cupboard, but Harriet had always been small and skinny for her age. She looked even smaller and skinnier than she really was because all she had to wear were old clothes of Dudley's, and Dudley was about four times bigger than she was. Harriet had a thin face, knobby knees, long black hair, which fell in a mess of unruly waves, and bright green eyes. She wore round glasses held together with a lot of Scotch tape because of all the times Dudley had punched her on the nose. The only thing Harriet liked about her own appearance was a very thin scar on her forehead that was shaped like a bolt of lightning. She had had it as long as she could remember, and the first question she could ever remember asking her Aunt Petunia was how she had gotten it.

"In the car crash when your parents died," she had said. "And don't ask questions."

Don't ask questions — that was the first rule for a quiet life with the Dursleys.

Uncle Vernon entered the kitchen as Harriet was turning over the bacon.

"Comb your hair!" he barked, by way of a morning greeting.

About once a week, Uncle Vernon looked over the top of his newspaper and shouted that Harriet needed a haircut. Harriet must have had more haircuts than the rest of the girls in her class put together, but it made no difference, her hair simply grew that way — wild and all over the place.

Harriet was frying eggs by the time Dudley arrived in the kitchen with his mother. Dudley looked a lot like Uncle Vernon. He had a large pink face, not much neck, small, watery blue eyes, and thick blond hair that lay smoothly on his thick, fat head. Aunt Petunia often said that Dudley looked like a baby angel — Harriet often said that Dudley looked like a pig in a wig.

Harriet put the plates of egg and bacon on the table, which was difficult as there wasn't much room. Dudley, meanwhile, was counting his presents. His face fell.

"Thirty-six," he said, looking up at his mother and father. "That's two less than last year."

"Darling, you haven't counted Auntie Marge's present, see, it's here under this big one from Mummy and Daddy."

"All right, thirty-seven then," said Dudley, going red in the face. Harriet, who could see a huge Dudley tantrum coming on, began wolfing down her bacon as fast as possible in case Dudley turned the table over.

Aunt Petunia obviously scented danger, too, because she said quickly, "And we'll buy you another two presents while we're out today. How's that, popkin? Two more presents. Is that all right?"

Dudley thought for a moment. It looked like hard work. Finally he said slowly, "So I'll have thirty... thirty..."

"Thirty-nine, sweetums," said Aunt Petunia.

"Oh." Dudley sat down heavily and grabbed the nearest parcel. "All right then."

Uncle Vernon chuckled.

"Little tyke wants his money's worth, just like his father. 'Atta boy, Dudley!" He ruffled Dudley's hair.

At that moment the telephone rang and Aunt Petunia went to answer it while Harry and Uncle Vernon watched Dudley unwrap the racing bike, a video camera, a remote control airplane, sixteen new computer games, and a VCR.

He was ripping the paper off a gold wristwatch when Aunt Petunia came back from the telephone looking both angry and worried.

"Bad news, Vernon," she said. "Mrs. Figg's broken her leg. She can't take the girl."

She jerked her head in Harriet's direction.

Dudley's mouth fell open in horror, but Harriet's heart gave a leap. Every year on Dudley's birthday, his parents took him and a friend out for the day, to adventure parks, hamburger restaurants, or the movies. Every year, Harriet was left behind with Mrs. Figg, a mad old lady who lived two streets away. Harriet hated it there. The whole house smelled of cabbage and Mrs. Figg made her look at photographs of all the cats she'd ever owned.

"Now what?" said Aunt Petunia, looking furiously at Harriet as though she'd planned this. Harriet knew she ought to feel sorry that Mrs. Figg had broken her leg, but it wasn't easy when she reminded herself it would be a whole year before she had to look at Tibbles, Snowy, Mr. Paws, and Tufty again.

"We could phone Marge," Uncle Vernon suggested.

"Don't be silly, Vernon, she hates the girl."



The Dursleys often spoke about Harriet like this, as though she wasn't there — or rather, as though she was something very nasty that couldn't understand them, like a slug.

"What about what's-her-name, your friend — Yvonne?"

"On vacation in Majorca," snapped Aunt Petunia.

"You could just leave me here," Harriet put in hopefully (she'd be able to watch what she wanted on television for a change and maybe even have a go on Dudley's computer).

Aunt Petunia looked as though she'd just swallowed a lemon.

"And come back and find the house in ruins?" she snarled.

"I won't blow up the house," said Harriet, but they weren't listening.

"I suppose we could take her to the zoo," said Aunt Petunia slowly, "... and leave her in the car..."

"That car's new, she's not sitting in it alone..."

Dudley began to cry loudly. In fact, he wasn't really crying — it had been years since he'd really cried — but he knew that if he screwed up his face and wailed, his mother would give him anything he wanted.

"Dinky Duddydums, don't cry, Mummy won't let her spoil your special day!" she cried, flinging her arms around him.

"I... don't... want... her... t-t-to come!" Dudley yelled between huge, pretend sobs. "She always sp-spoils everything!" He shot Harriet a nasty grin through the gap in his mother's arms.

Just then, the doorbell rang — "Oh, good Lord, they're here!" said Aunt Petunia frantically — and a moment later, Dudley's best friend, Piers Polkiss, walked in with his mother.

Piers was a scrawny boy with a face like a rat. He was usually the one who held people's arms behind their backs while Dudley hit them. Dudley stopped pretending to cry at once.

Half an hour later, Harriet, who couldn't believe her luck, was sitting in the back of the Dursleys' car with Piers and Dudley, on the way to the zoo for the first time in her life. Her aunt and uncle hadn't been able to think of anything else to do with her, but before they'd left, Uncle Vernon had taken Harriet aside.

"I'm warning you," he had said, putting his large purple face right up close to Harriet's, "I'm warning you now, girl — any funny business, anything at all — and you'll be in that cupboard from now until Christmas."

"I'm not going to do anything," said Harriet, "honestly..."

But Uncle Vernon didn't believe her. No one ever did.

The problem was, strange things often happened around Harriet and it was just no good telling the Dursleys she didn't make them happen.

Once, Aunt Petunia, tired of Harriet coming back from the salon looking as though she hadn't been at all, had taken a pair of kitchen scissors and cut her hair so horribly that it looked as if a kindergartner had done it. The cut was so short that her unruly hair stuck out in an awkward triangle shape, not to mention her uneven bangs, which Aunt Petunia had left "to hide that horrible scar." Dudley had laughed himself silly at Harriet, who spent a sleepless night imagining school the next day, where she was already laughed at for her baggy clothes and taped glasses. Next morning, however, she had gotten up to find her hair exactly as it had been before Aunt Petunia had sheared it off. She had been given a week in her cupboard for this, even though she had tried to explain that she couldn't explain how it had grown back so quickly.

Another time, Aunt Petunia had been trying to force her into a revolting old sweater of Dudley's (brown with orange puff balls). The harder she tried to pull it over her head, the smaller it seemed to become, until finally it might have fitted a hand puppet, but certainly wouldn't fit Harriet. Aunt Petunia had decided it must have shrunk in the wash and, to her great relief, Harriet wasn't punished.

On the other hand, she'd gotten into terrible trouble for being found on the roof of the school kitchens. Dudley's gang had been chasing her as usual when, as much to Harriet's surprise as anyone else's,

there she was sitting on the chimney. The Dursleys had received a very angry letter from Harriet's headmistress telling them Harriet had been climbing school buildings. But all she'd tried to do (as she shouted at Uncle Vernon through the locked door of her cupboard) was jump behind the big trashcans outside the kitchen doors. Harriet supposed that the wind must have caught her in mid-jump.

But today, nothing was going to go wrong. It was even worth being with Dudley and Piers to be spending the day somewhere that wasn't school, her cupboard, or Mrs. Figg's cabbage-smelling living room.

While he drove, Uncle Vernon complained to Aunt Petunia. He liked to complain about things: people at work, Harriet, the council, Harriet, the bank, and Harriet were just a few of his favorite subjects. This morning, it was motorcycles.

"... roaring along like maniacs, the young hoodlums," he said, as a motorcycle overtook them.

"I had a dream about a motorcycle," said Harriet, remembering suddenly. "It was flying."

Uncle Vernon nearly crashed into the car in front. He turned right around in his seat and yelled at Harriet, his face like a gigantic beet with a mustache: "MOTORCYCLES DON'T FLY!"

Dudley and Piers sniggered.

"I know they don't," said Harriet. "It was only a dream."

But she wished she hadn't said anything. If there was one thing the Dursleys hated even more than her asking questions, it was her talking about anything acting in a way it shouldn't, no matter if it was in a dream or even a cartoon — they seemed to think she might get dangerous ideas.

Harriet Potter, The Zoo-April, 1991

It was a very sunny Saturday and the zoo was crowded with families. The Dursleys bought Dudley and Piers large chocolate ice creams at the entrance and then, because the smiling lady in the van had asked Harriet what she wanted before they could hurry her away,

they bought her a cheap lemon ice pop. It wasn't bad, either, Harriet thought, licking it as they watched a gorilla scratching its head who looked remarkably like Dudley, except that it wasn't blond.

Harriet had the best morning she'd had in a long time. She was careful to walk a little way apart from the Dursleys so that Dudley and Piers, who were starting to get bored with the animals by lunchtime, wouldn't fall back on their favorite hobby of hitting her. They ate in the zoo restaurant, and when Dudley had a tantrum because his knickerbocker glory didn't have enough ice cream on top, Uncle Vernon bought him another one and Harriet was allowed to finish the first.

Harriet felt, afterward, that she should have known it was all too good to last.

After lunch they went to the reptile house. It was cool and dark in there, with lit windows all along the walls. Behind the glass, all sorts of lizards and snakes were crawling and slithering over bits of wood and stone. Dudley and Piers wanted to see huge, poisonous cobras and thick, man-crushing pythons. Dudley quickly found the largest snake in the place. It could have wrapped its body twice around Uncle Vernon's car and crushed it into a trash can — but at the moment it didn't look in the mood. In fact, it was fast asleep.

Dudley stood with his nose pressed against the glass, staring at the glistening brown coils.

"Make it move," he whined at his father. Uncle Vernon tapped on the glass, but the snake didn't budge.

"Do it again," Dudley ordered. Uncle Vernon rapped the glass smartly with his knuckles, but the snake just snoozed on.

"This is boring," Dudley moaned. He shuffled away.

Harriet moved in front of the tank and looked intently at the snake. She wouldn't have been surprised if it had died of boredom itself — no company except stupid people drumming their fingers on the glass trying to disturb it all day long. It was worse than having a cupboard as a bedroom, where the only visitor was Aunt Petunia hammering on the door to wake you up; at least she got to visit the rest of the house.

The snake suddenly opened its beady eyes. Slowly, very slowly, it raised its head until its eyes were on a level with Harriet's.

It winked.

Harriet stared. Then she looked quickly around to see if anyone was watching. They weren't. She looked back at the snake and winked, too.

The snake jerked its head toward Uncle Vernon and Dudley, then raised its eyes to the ceiling. It gave Harriet a look that said quite plainly:

"I get that all the time."

"I know," Harriet murmured through the glass, though she wasn't sure the snake could hear her. "It must be really annoying."

The snake nodded vigorously.

"Where do you come from, anyway?" Harriet asked.

The snake jabbed its tail at a little sign next to the glass. Harriet peered at it.

Boa Constrictor, Brazil.

"Was it nice there?"

The boa constrictor jabbed its tail at the sign again and Harriet read on: This specimen was bred in the zoo. "Oh, I see — so you've never been to Brazil?"

As the snake shook its head, a deafening shout behind Harriet made both of them jump. "DUDLEY! MR. DURSLEY! COME AND LOOK AT THIS SNAKE! YOU WON'T BELIEVE WHAT IT'S DOING!"

Dudley came waddling toward them as fast as he could.

"Out of the way, you," he said, punching Harriet in the ribs. Caught by surprise, Harriet fell hard on the concrete floor. What came next happened so fast no one saw how it happened — one second, Piers

and Dudley were leaning right up close to the glass, the next, they had fallen in with howls of horror.

Harriet sat up and gasped; the glass front of the boa constrictor's tank had vanished. The great snake was uncoiling itself rapidly, slithering out onto the floor, both Dudley and Piers frozen in shock. People throughout the reptile house screamed and started running for the exits.

As the snake slid swiftly past her, Harriet could have sworn a low, hissing voice said, "Brazil, here I come... Thanksss, amiga."

Harriet, eyes wide in shock, gave a small, "Anytime," and the snake quickly slid away towards the entrance. Harriet couldn't help but wonder how the snake had learned Portuguese if it had been born in England, before realizing that the Dursleys would flay her hide if they realized what she had done (and somehow she knew that this was her fault, even if she wasn't sure how).

Scrambling to the floor, she made looked quickly around the reptile house, whose visitors were still screaming and running in all direction, and saw that Dudley and Piers were still in the tank...the glass had reappeared before they could get out! Aunt Petunia was clawing desperately at the glass, as if that would make it disappear again and Uncle Vernon was yelling at the keeper of the reptile house.

Harriet took advantage of the hectic moment to retreat into one of the quieter corners of the reptile house, hoping to wait out the Dursleys' anger and avoid any punishment. She quietly leaned against the wall, watching as several of the zoo keepers began to try and remove Dudley and Piers from the enclosure, when a small voice near her ankle caught her attention.

"Oi," came a small hissing sound, causing Harriet to abruptly look down. On the floor was a small, orangish-brown snake.

"Oh," said Harriet, startled, "Hello." Then, not wanting to seem rude, "Did you come from the tank with the other snake?"

"Yesss," hissed the snake, and Harriet was pleased to recognize the same Brazilian accent the other snake had possessed. "You arre a ssspeaker?"

"I guess so," said Harriet slowly, because the snake seemed pretty sure of the fact. "although I am not sure what that means exactly."

"Itt meaanss, pequenina, that you can sspeak to sssnakessss. It isss an honor to ssserve a sssspeaker."

"Oh," exclaimed Harriet, "I don't think that's-" Harriet was cut off, though, as she felt the snake climb up her leg and firmly wrap its small body around her ankle. "But I don't even know your name!" she argued.

"Isssaura, pequenina," the snake replied, sounding slightly muffled by her pants. "My name iss Isssaura."

"Isaura," tested Harriet, and the snake gave a small hiss of approval. Harriet gave one last look at the lump underneath her pant leg, then searched the room (which had now emptied of visitors) for her aunt and uncle. Dudley and Piers were both finally out of the tank, but they were shaking and soaking wet, both of their shoulders draped in the thick towels provided by the zoo.

The keeper of the reptile house was in shock.

"But the enclosure," he kept saying, "how did they get in?"

The zoo director himself made Aunt Petunia a cup of strong, sweet tea while he apologized over and over again. Piers and Dudley could only gibber. As far as Harriet had seen, the snake hadn't done anything except snap playfully at their heels as it passed, but by the time they were all back in Uncle Vernon's car, Dudley was telling them how it had nearly bitten off his leg, while Piers was swearing it had tried to squeeze him to death. But worst of all, for Harriet at least, was Piers calming down enough to say, "Harriet was talking to it, weren't you, Harriet?"

Harriet gulped at the sight of her Uncle's dangerously purple face.

Harriet Potter, 4 Privet Drive, Little Whinging, Surrey-April, 1991

Uncle Vernon waited until Piers was safely out of the house before starting on Harriet. He was so angry he could hardly speak. He managed to say, "Go — cupboard — stay — no meals," before he

collapsed into a chair, and Aunt Petunia had to run and get him a large brandy.

Harriet lay in her dark cupboard much later, talking to Isaura, who had finally come out from under her pant leg. Harriet learned that Isaura was only a few years old and had once belonged to a small boy who had not treated her very well (hence her small size). Eventually, it had been found out and she had been rescued and taken to the zoo. Isaura had also told her what "pequenina" meant ("little one", apparently) and, at Harriet's objections, Isaura assured Harriet that she too was undersized, due to her previous owner's maltreatment of her. Isaura asked if there was any way she could be let out to hunt, but Harriet didn't know what time it was and he couldn't be sure the Dursleys were asleep yet. Until they were, she couldn't risk sneaking to the kitchen for some food or to let Isaura out the back door.

She'd lived with the Dursleys almost ten years, ten miserable years, as long as she could remember, ever since she'd been a baby and her parents had died in that car crash. She couldn't remember being in the car when her parents had died. Sometimes, when she strained her memory during long hours in her cupboard, she came up with a strange vision: a blinding flash of green light and a burning pain on her forehead. This, she supposed, was the crash, though she couldn't imagine where all the green light came from. She couldn't remember her parents at all. Her aunt and uncle never spoke about them, and of course she was forbidden to ask questions. There were no photographs of them in the house.

When she had been younger, Harriet had dreamed and dreamed of some unknown relation coming to take her away, but it had never happened; the Dursleys were her only family. Yet sometimes she thought (or maybe hoped) that strangers in the street seemed to know her. Very strange strangers they were, too. A tiny man in a violet top hat had bowed to her once while out shopping with Aunt Petunia and Dudley. After asking Harriet furiously if she knew the man, Aunt Petunia had rushed them out of the shop without buying anything. A wild-looking old woman dressed all in green had waved merrily at her once on a bus. A bald man in a very long purple coat had actually shaken her hand in the street the other day and then walked away without a word. The weirdest thing about all these people was the way they seemed to vanish the second Harriet tried to get a closer look.



At school, Harriet had no one. Everybody knew that Dudley's gang hated that odd Harriet Potter in her baggy old clothes and broken glasses, and nobody liked to disagree with Dudley's gang.

With a sigh, Harriet curled up on her cot, Isaura making herself as comfortable as she could by wrapping herself around one of its rickety legs.

Little did Harriet know, that soon, somewhere far away, a man and a woman who loved her very much would be waking up for the first time in almost eleven years...

St. Mungo's - May 23, 1991

Albus Dumbledore walked quickly through the halls of St. Mungo's. He had received a message just a few minutes ago and had come as quickly as possible.

"Albus!" Came a voice from behind him. Turning, he saw Remus running quickly towards him.

"Is it true?" He fired quickly, "Are they awake?"

"That is what I have been told," Dumbledore answered as they reached the door to the hospital room. "And I guess we are about to find out."

The door opened revealing Lily and James Potter.

Awake.

"Moony!" Exclaimed James as soon as he set sight on his friend. He tried to sit up, but the healer who was bustling around the room forced him back down onto his bed.

"Mr. Potter! You need to rest!" The healer turned to the two new occupants of the room, "You can stay as long as you need, but if they get upset or tired, you will have to leave." He left.

"Remus...Professor," Began Lily. "What's going on? How long have we been here? Where is Harriet? My mother and father? Nobody will tell us anything!"

"Lily, James" Dumbledore spoke calmly, "We will tell you everything, but you must relax. First off, Harriet is fine." When the two nodded, Remus and Dumbledore each drew up a chair. Dumbledore began explaining what they had missed. He had just told them that Sirius had betrayed them to Voldemort when James interrupted.

"But Sirius couldn't have done it, Professor!" Exclaimed James.

"James," Remus said gently, "I know it is hard to believe-"

"No!" James exclaimed, "He couldn't have! We switched secret keepers!"

Silence followed his statement.

"You switched secret keepers? And didn't tell me?" James heard the hurt in his friend's voice.

"I'm sorry, Remus," He said quietly, "We just figured the less people involved the better, but I also couldn't help but suspect-"

"That I was the spy?" James looked down, too ashamed to look his friend in eye.

"You were just acting so off. You kept leaving and coming at odd times and you were so evasive-" He took a deep breath, trying to calm himself down.

"I was on a mission," said Remus quietly. James's head snapped up to look at his friend. Remus wasn't looking at him though, he was looking at the wall above James's bed. "I was working underground with the werewolves."

James nodded slowly, "I never should have doubted you. You never gave me any reason to. Can you forgive me?"

Remus looked at his friend, looking more ashamed than he had ever seen him. For ten years, Remus had worried over the fact that James might never wake up, but he had and he was going to be okay. Remus smiled, his joy at his friends' awakening outweighing any anger he might have felt under normal circumstances. "Of course."

"Who did you choose to become your secret keeper?" Asked Dumbledore after a moment, trying to refocus the discussion.

"Peter," Lily told him.

"Peter!" Remus yelped, realizing why Sirius had, in fact, blown up Peter and wishing that he had been the one to do it. "He was the one who betrayed you to Voldemort?"

"He must have been," James said quietly, unable to believe that his friend would do something like that. Yes, he had suspected Remus of working with Voldemort, but it just wasn't as real as having tangible proof of what Peter had done. After all, they had been best friends with each other for years.

"Hmm..." Dumbledore mused, before turning to Remus. "I believe that I have an answer as to why Mr. Black murdered-"

"Wait!"

"What?"

Both Lily and James exclaimed, knowing that they must have had misheard former headmaster since Sirius never would have killed anybody.

Dumbledore explained what had happened to Sirius while they were unconscious: that he had gone after Peter Pettigrew and cornered him in a street full of Muggles. Peter confronted Sirius just before Sirius killed him and thirteen other Muggles.

"All they found of Peter was his finger," he finished.

"But Sirius would never do that! And even if he did, sure there would be some sort of justification due to Peter's actions!" Lily protested, remembering how protective Sirius had always been of his friends and, in particular, how much he loved Harriet. "And how could they be so unfair as to not let him have a trial?"

"Surely there is something you can do, sir?" James pleaded, unable to bear the thought of his best friend in Azkaban. Dumbledore considered.

"I suppose I might be able to convince Minister Fudge to give Sirius a proper trial, with this new evidence. Especially considering the fact that Sirius wasn't really your secret keeper and therefore couldn't betray you."

Both James and Lily sighed in relief. Remus looked down at his hands guiltily. How could he have believed his friend Sirius had betrayed Lily and James? Then again, how could he not realize Peter's true intentions? He had seen how the war had torn other families apart, but it was only now that he realized how much destruction had been inflicted on his own (somewhat unorthodox) family.

Realizing what Remus must have been thinking, James reached out and placed a hand on his shoulder. Remus shot him a grateful smile.

"Now," Dumbledore broke the silence, "Where was I?"

"You were telling us about Voldemort coming to our house." James said grimly.

"Oh!" Lily exclaimed suddenly, "Harriet! Is Harriet okay?" Both James and Lily looked at Dumbledore, afraid of the answer.

"She is fine, as I told you earlier." They sighed and Dumbledore finished telling them about the events of that night. The four were solemn after he was done, contemplating the magnitude of all that had happened. After all, Lily's parents had died... and nobody had ever survived the killing curse.

"So where is Harriet now?" Lily asked after a moment.

"She is with the only blood relative she has left."

"Not Petunia!" Lily gasped, sudden dread filling her at imagining what Harriet's life must have been like living with her dreadful sister and her husband and son. When Dumbledore nodded, she added "But she hates Magic!"

"I know," Dumbledore responded, "However, I believe it was the safest place for her at the time. At least, from Voldemort's followers."

"Blood protection," Remus whispered. Dumbledore nodded.

"So what happens now?" James prodded.

"The healers have informed me that you are to remain here for the rest of the week. Until then, I will work on getting a trial set up for Sirius." Dumbledore informed them. He turned to Remus, "And I am sure Remus wouldn't mind working on getting one of your houses back to its original state?" Remus nodded and Dumbledore got up.

"Until then."

Dumbledore's Office, Hogwarts-One Week Later (May 31, 1991)

Lily and James sat in Dumbledore's office. The last time they had been in here, they had been discussing ways to keep Harriet safe. Now, they were going to discuss ways to get Harriet back. Remus stood gazing out the window at the grounds of the school, watching the sun set.

"Dumbledore is late," He muttered.

"I'm sure he will be here soon, Remus" Lily soothed. No sooner had she spoken when the door to the office opened, revealing Dumbledore. His robes were bright green and his eyes were twinkling merrily. He seemed quite pleased about something.

"Hello James, Lily, Remus!" He said jovially. "I am sorry I am late, but I have been working very hard on a rather special project.

"It is quite alright, Professor," Lilly smiled.

"Lily, please, its Albus. It has been at least fourteen years since you graduated Hogwarts." He clapped. "But no matter! Now that my project is complete, I have something for you. Or rather, someone!"

He stepped aside revealing a man the three others in the room hadn't seen in almost eleven years. He was fairly tall with grey eyes and long, dirty black hair. His skin was pale and matted with dirt and (because he was so thin) it seemed to be stretched taught over his bones. At the sight of the others, the man smiled slightly, revealing a set of yellow teeth.

"Moony...Prongs... Lily."

"Sirius!" Lily exclaimed, getting up to embrace her friend.

"Padfoot!" Cried James before following his wife. Both hugged Sirius and he did the same to them. Remus stood behind them looking on. Both Lily and James took a step back giving the two friends a clear view of each other.

"Moony."

"Padfoot," Remus replied. He looked down at his shoes and then back up. "You've let yourself go." Sirius snorted.

"Yes, well, from where I'm standing, you aren't exactly the picture of youth, yourself."

"Could you ever forgive me?" Remus, said, suddenly, solemn. Seeing Sirius's confusion, he elaborated. "For believing you betrayed Lily and James for all of these years."

"There is nothing to forgive." Both men smiled before embracing like brothers.

"Thanks to the enlightening information you provided me with," informed Dumbledore, "I was able to convince Fudge to give Sirius a chance. He appeared in court, and, thanks to a bottle of Veritaserum, is now a free man. I expect you will be reading more about it in tomorrow's issue of the Daily Prophet."

"But what happened that day?" Remus asked curiously. "When Peter died?"

"I went to confront him about his betrayal," Sirius began, sitting down. "However, before I could say anything, he yelled at me for giving you up to Voldemort. He must have had a wand hidden behind his back, because next thing I knew, there was an explosion and thirteen muggles were dead."

"He killed himself?"

"It would appear so," muttered Dumbledore.

"Actually, sir," Sirius said hesitantly, "I think he transformed." Both Remus and James looked sharply at their friend shocked that he, of all people, would be the one to first inform Dumbledore about their status as illegal animagi. Then again, if Pettigrew really had transformed, it was imperative that the headmaster knew about.

All it took was Dumbledore raising an eyebrow, before all three Marauders were pouring out their story, words spilling over each other, talking over one another. They explained the illegal transformations, the Map, their midnight romps...all of it.

"Well," said Dumbledore, "I must inform the Auror's of this immediately, if Pettigrew is ever to be apprehended."

"You aren't angry?" Remus asked, hesitant. Dumbledore slowly shook his head and the men all let their shoulder sag, visibly demonstrating their relief.

Lily sniffled and bit back a sob.

"Lily?" James asked worried.

"I'm okay." She told him. "I'm just very happy." He nodded as Remus and Sirius sat down next to them.

"Perhaps, we should move onto some other business?" When everybody nodded, Dumbledore asked, "And perhaps we should eat as we discuss?" When everybody agreed again, Dumbledore sighed.

"Now," began Dumbledore, after summoning some food for them since it was close to dinner, "We are all here regarding the matter of Harriet's guardianship."

"Harriet's guardianship!" exclaimed Sirius. He turned to Remus. "Surely she would have gone to live with you, Moony." When his friend shook his head, Sirius turned back to the others.

"Then who?"

"The Dursleys," answered Dumbledore. Hearing Sirius's protests he continued. "It was necessary for Harriet to live with somebody who was related, by blood, to Rose. Thus, the protection Rose gave

Harriet -when she sacrificed her life- would live on. Thankfully, it will not be too long until Harriet is returned to her true family."

"Can we leave now?" James asked Dumbledore eagerly.

"I do not think that would be wise considering how you look."

"Well, if you were trapped in Azkaban for ten years I doubt you would look better," muttered Sirius as he took a sip of the Pumpkin juice Dumbledore had procured.

"Actually, Sirius, I was referring to your robes," chuckled the Professor. "When I left her on the Dursleys' doorstep all those years ago, I left Harriet a letter, so she is hopefully aware of the situation. However, there is no need to take the risk and frighten her."

"Although now that you mention it, Padfoot," joked James, "You could probably use a shower." Sirius scowled at his friend, but before he could retort, Remus jumped in.

"So tomorrow, then? We can pick Harriet up tomorrow?" Dumbledore nodded and reached to pull something out of his desk.

"Here is her Hogwarts letter," The headmaster said, "I thought you might enjoy giving it to her early. It also has her current address on it." James happily took the letter and looked at the words written on it. The others peered over his shoulder:

Harriet Lily Potter

The Cupboard Under the Stairs

4 Privet Drive

Little Whinging

Surrey

"When they say "cupboard under the stairs," commented James, "I hope they are referring to a cupboard that has been turned into a very comfortable and nicely furnished bedroom."

"They better be," Sirius said darkly.



"Well we will see tomorrow, won't we?" Lily muttered.

Yes. Tomorrow.

4 Privet Drive, Little Whinging, Surrey-June 30, 1991

The escape of the Brazilian boa constrictor earned Harriet her longest-ever punishment. Harriet couldn't help but be grateful that the Dursleys had not found out about Isaura (whom Harriet had managed to sneak out of the house on the first night of her punishment, but who she saw every day when she went to do the gardening). By the time she was allowed out of her cupboard again, the summer holidays had started and Dudley had already broken his new video camera, crashed his remote control airplane, and, first time out on his racing bike, knocked down old Mrs. Figg as she crossed Privet Drive on her crutches.

Harriet was glad school was over, but there was no escaping Dudley's gang, who visited the house every single day. Piers, Dennis, Malcolm, and Gordon were all big and stupid, but as Dudley was the biggest and stupidest of the lot, he was the leader.

The rest of them were all quite happy to join in Dudley's favorite sport: Harriet Hunting.

This was why Harriet spent as much time as possible out of the house, wandering around and talking to Isaura, her first ever friend. She told Isaura about how much she looked forward to the end of the holidays, where she could see a tiny ray of hope. When September came she would be going off to secondary school and, for the first time in her life, she wouldn't be with Dudley. Dudley had been accepted at Uncle Vernon's old private school, Smeltings. Piers Polkiss was going there too. Harriet, on the other hand, was going to Stonewall High, the local public school. Dudley thought this was very funny.

"They stuff people's heads down the toilet the first day at Stonewall," he told Harriet. "Want to come upstairs and practice?"

"No, thanks," said Harriet. "The poor toilet's never had anything as horrible as your head down it — it might be sick." Then she ran, before Dudley could work out what she'd said.

One day in late June, Aunt Petunia took Dudley to London to buy his Smeltings uniform, leaving Harriet at Mrs. Figg's.

Mrs. Figg wasn't as bad as usual. It turned out she'd broken her leg tripping over one of her cats, and she didn't seem quite as fond of them as before. She let Harriet watch television and gave her a bit of chocolate cake that tasted as though she'd had it for several years.

That evening, Dudley paraded around the living room for the family in his brand-new uniform. Smeltings' boys wore maroon tailcoats, orange knickerbockers, and flat straw hats called boaters. They also carried knobbly sticks, used for hitting each other while the teachers weren't looking. This was supposed to be good training for later life.

As he looked at Dudley in his new knickerbockers, Uncle Vernon said gruffly that it was the proudest moment of his life. Aunt Petunia burst into tears and said she couldn't believe it was her Ickle Dudleykins, he looked so handsome and grown-up. Harriet didn't trust herself to speak. She thought two of her ribs might already have cracked from trying not to laugh and Isaura, curled discretely around Harriet's ankle, as per usual, seemed to be giving off some odd hissing sound. Harriet was worried, until later when Isaura assured her that she was just laughing at the fat-boy's outfit.

There was a horrible smell in the kitchen the next morning when Harriet went in for breakfast. Isaura smelled it as well, curling more tightly around Harriet's ankle. It seemed to be coming from a large metal tub in the sink. She went to have a look. The tub was full of what looked like dirty rags swimming in gray water.

"What's this?" she asked Aunt Petunia. Her lips tightened as they always did if she dared to ask a question.

"Your new school uniform," she said.

Harriet looked in the bowl again.

"Oh," she said, "I didn't realize it had to be so wet." Aunt Petunia's hand darted out so quickly that Harriet had no time to duck. The slap resounded around the kitchen and Harriet eyes watered from the sharp sting in her cheek. Isaura gave a loud hiss of disapproval from Harriet's ankle, which her aunt didn't hear, but the snake didn't do anything. Harriet had warned her friend about the Dursleys' treatment of her, cautioning her not to do anything that might reveal her presence to them.

"Don't talk back!" snapped Aunt Petunia, as Harriet rubbed her cheek, where a bruise was most definitely starting to form. "And don't be stupid! I'm dyeing some of Dudley's old things gray for you. It'll look just like everyone else's when I've finished."

Harriet seriously doubted this, but thought it best not to argue.

She sat down at the table and tried not to think about how she was going to look on her first day at Stonewall High — like she was wearing bits of old elephant skin, probably.

Dudley and Uncle Vernon came in, both with wrinkled noses because of the smell from Harriet's new uniform. Uncle Vernon opened his newspaper as usual and Dudley banged his Smelting stick, which he carried everywhere, on the table.

They heard some footsteps, followed by the annoying ring of the doorbell.

"Get the door, Dudley," said Uncle Vernon from behind his paper.

"Make Harriet get it."

"Get the door, Harriet."

"Make Dudley get it."

"Poke her with your Smelting stick, Dudley."

Harriet easily dodged the Smelting stick and went to answer the door. Opening it, she found herself face-to-face with four of the most interesting looking people she had ever seen.

The tallest of the lot was a man with jet black hair (like hers), which stuck out in a million different directions, and hazel eyes. To the right of him, stood another man. He had light brown hair, which was thinning slightly and warm, golden-brown eyes. To the right of this man, was the most eccentric man of all. His hair was long and black, pulled into a low ponytail and his eyes were grey. He wore the interesting look of a sick person who had just gotten healthy and was getting used to being normal again. The only woman of the

group stood to the left of the first man. Her hair was red and straight and her eyes were a stunning, emerald green (just like Harriet's!).

Seeing Harriet, the woman started to smile. Lily couldn't help it. She was seeing her daughter for the first time in ten years. She was so grown up... James, Sirius, and Remus all seemed to be sharing similar sentiments, as they were smiling at her, too.

Although no introductions had been made, there was no doubt in their minds that this was Harriet. The messy black hair...bright green eyes...the lightning shaped scar, which Dumbledore had warned them about. The only quality that might cause them to doubt her identity was her unbelievably small stature. Both James and Lily were fairly tall (although James didn't hit his growth-spurt until 5th year), but Lily hoped that she only looked small because of the overly large clothes she was wearing. The fact that the clothes were old and worn was not lost on Lily, nor did it escape the notice of the Marauders. Their keen eyes also noticed the prominent and rather ugly bruise on her cheek.

Definitely something to talk to the Dursleys about.

The discussion would have to be saved until later, however, because Harriet was looking quite uncomfortable with all the staring. In an attempt to diffuse the slight awkwardness she was feeling at having four complete strangers smiling at her, she managed a weak grin of her own.

"Hello..." She began, before pausing, uncertain. Rocking back and forth on her heels, she looked down at the floor. Taking a deep breath, she looked up and asked, politely, like Aunt Petunia had taught her, "May I help you?"

"Actually, yes," said Remus. They had decided to have him do most of the talking at first. Lily and James probably wouldn't be able to say anything without crying hysterically and, as for Sirius, they were worried he might be a bit too... over-enthusiastic. "We have a few things to discuss with your Aunt and Uncle. Might we come in?"

Harriet's face scrunched in confusion. Uncle Vernon hadn't mentioned having any colleagues over. She would have known if he had, because Harriet would have been forced to clean the house from top to bottom, before being unceremoniously shoved into her

cupboard. According to Uncle Vernon, this was to prevent his co-workers from noticing her "freakishness."

"Uncle Vernon didn't mention any of his co-workers coming to visit," Harriet stated, looking at the brown-haired man curiously, eyes innocent. Remus blinked in surprise, but quickly gathered himself. He had not prepared himself for how much Harriet's eyes would look like Lily's.

"We aren't from his work and he doesn't know we are coming." Harriet bit her lip and tried to think about why somebody would want to see her Uncle. Her eyes widened.

"You aren't here from the zoo, are you?" Not giving the man a chance to answer, she began to ramble worriedly, "I'm really sorry, sir! I have no idea what happened to the glass! One minute it was there and the next it was gone! The snake got out of the tank and- it didn't hurt anybody did he? He seemed really, nice, but, then again, I supposed it must be really hard to tell with a snake. Don't punish him too badly! He told me that he just wanted to go to Brazil, which makes sense since he's never seen his family...not to mention it has to be really boring lying there, day after day after day. I know I'd be bored and I imagine you-" She was cut off.

"Harriet," Sirius interrupted, laughing. "We aren't from the zoo. And you aren't in trouble." He turned to James and smirked. "Just like you, eh, Prongs?" James glared at his friend, but inwardly couldn't help but feel a bit proud: Not even in school and already causing trouble!

Harriet let out a sigh of relief, before tensing up again.

"How do you know my name?" she questioned, glaring defiantly at the group.

"It's sort of complicated, dear," the Lily said gently, speaking for the first time. It seemed that Dumbledore had been right and that the Dursleys hadn't told Harriet anything about the wizarding world. Of course, it was also possible that Harriet just didn't recognize them. "Why don't you let us in? That way we can explain."

Harriet looked at the people for a second, before nodding slowly and stepping aside, so they could enter the house. The way she saw it, if

they had wanted to hurt her, they could've done so already. Closing the door, she turned around to face them.

They were looking around the hall, examining the pictures which adorned the walls. Sirius frowned. He couldn't see any pictures of Harriet, just of some blonde kid, whom he assumed to be Harriet's cousin, Dudley. James, Remus, and Lily didn't look to happy about the lack of photographs, either.

"So," Harriet asked, after giving them a minute, "How do you know my name?"

"Persistent isn't she?" muttered James to his wife. "She gets that from you." Harriet frowned at the lack of answer, but before she could question them on what that statement meant, her uncle called from the kitchen.

"Girl! What's taking you so long! I need my coffee!"

"There are some people here to see you, Uncle Vernon." She answered, eyes never wavering from the group in the hall. Lily raised her eyebrows at the tone of the voice. That must be Petunia's husband, she mused.

"If they are salesmen, tell them that I am not interested! And get in here! Dudders wants more bacon!"

James scowled. My daughter is not a house-elf!

"Uhh..." Harriet hesitated. Were they salespeople? The golden-eyed man shook his head at her, allowing Harriet to respond to her Uncle. "They say they aren't salespeople." Harriet didn't bother answering her Uncle about Dudley's bacon.

Remus heard an annoyed grunt, followed by the sound of a weighted down chair scraping the floor. A few seconds later, the hulking form of an angry Vernon Dursley filled the doorway, his massive body blocking out any light that might be radiating from the kitchen.

"Idiot girl," he growled, advancing on her, first raised and his bushy mustache rippling on his great, purple, face, "Can't you do anything

right? Don't you know better than to yell at me from across the house?"

Before Harriet could come up with an adequate response to get herself out of trouble, although she doubted it would work, the red-haired woman spoke.

"Hello, Vernon," her voice might have sounded polite, but to those who knew her, especially as well as James did, a hidden malice could be heard. It was also impossible to overlook the angry glint in her usually gentle green eyes. Vernon turned towards the voice, paying attention to the guests for the first time. Harriet watched in a sort-of horrified fascination as her Uncle's face turned red, then white, followed by green, before settling on a grey-white color similar to that of the old porridge Aunt Petunia sometimes gave her (if she was lucky).

His eyes seemed in danger of popping out of their sockets and his mouth was open so wide that Harriet was expecting to see a toll-booth in there somewhere. Indeed, choking on a toll-booth might account for why he couldn't speak, for all he could managed were these small wheezing sounds which seemed to Harriet incredibly similar to a dying fish.

She cocked her head to the side, taking in Uncle Vernon.

Or maybe a dying buffalo. She mused. And as her Uncle let out a particular large groan-type sound, Harriet nodded. Definitely a buffalo.

"Pe-Pe-PETUNIA!" He bellowed loudly. So loudly, in fact, that Harriet, who was accustomed to her Uncle's loud yells, as they were usually directed at her, jumped. She listened intently to the sound of her Aunt's little kitten heels on the hardwood floor. Why her Aunt insisted on her hair being fully-coifed, her face completely done up in makeup, and wearing perfectly tailored outfits to the breakfast table was beyond Harriet, who preferred to dress hurriedly at the last minute and gain a few more precious minutes of sleep.

Her Aunt's rake thin body appeared in the doorway, briefly pausing to say something to Dudley, before continuing to the hall where Vernon was waiting. She glared at him pointedly, as she waited for him to explain why she had called him away from her "Precious



Popkin." When she realized that he wasn't going to answer, she followed his gaze to the group in the hall. At the sight of the adults, her back went rigid, and she began chewing manically on her lip, as if she had been starved for days and it was the only food she had.

"Hello, Petunia," said Lily sardonically, a saccharine smile plastered on her face. Her sister, she noted, hadn't changed in the 10 years she had been...asleep: same pinched-face, stick-like body, the same care for her outward appearance and, if the state of her house was any indication, the same obsession with order and cleanliness she had possessed even as a child.

"Li-Lily," Aunt Petunia stuttered, seeming at a loss for words. This seemed very odd to Harriet because Aunt Petunia, who was very worried about the opinion of others, often practiced speaking to guests in front of a mirror, in order to not embarrass herself.

The red-haired woman raised an eyebrow.

"Eleven years and that is all you have to see to me?"

"Wh-what are you doing here?" Aunt Petunia whimpered. This was not what Lily, who always wished that things with her sister had turned out differently, was wanting to hear. James, seeing the slight hurt in his wife's eyes, took over, answering firmly:

"We are here to pick up our daughter."

Harriet's eyes widened in surprise as Petunia let out a gasp. Harriet didn't understand who these people were talking about. She was the only girl in the house (minus Petunia, but she was obviously much too old to be this man's daughter) and her parents had died in a car crash when she was a baby. Vernon, unlike Petunia and Harriet, seemed glad at this news.

"You are? Good. Take her with you and don't come back. We've been saddled with the little freak for nine years and its time somebody took responsibility for her!"

Something unidentifiable to Harriet cackled in the air, as the mystery people tensed and glared at Vernon. Harriet was more confused than ever. Her uncle and Aunt had always made known their opinions of her and what a freak she was. Was it her they were

talking about? Her curiosity overwhelmed her and she turned to the grey-eyed man and blurted:

"Are you here to see me?" He looked shocked at being addressed and Harriet, realizing her place, quickly backtracked.

"I'm sorry! I-I-I know I'm not supposed to ask questions! I'm sorry! I didn't mean it!" The man didn't seem to care about whether or not she had broken one of Petunia's most important rules. He seemed more focused on something else.

"Harriet," he spoke quietly, his voice soothing and oddly familiar, kneeling down to look her in the eye "Do you mean that you have absolutely no idea what is going on?" At this point, all attention was on them, the Dursleys' previous comments forgotten.

Harriet shook her head "no" and the man straightened back up. He exchanged a look with the other adults. The man with the glasses sighed and said:

"Well, then, I guess we need to have a long chat, don't we?" He smiled at her, and when Harriet made no objection, he turned to the Dursleys, who were cowering against the wall. "You don't mind if we use your living room, do you? Excellent!" He cried, not waiting for an answer. The four adults traipsed into the living room and Harriet followed, albeit a bit more hesitant.

Inside the living room, Dudley sat on one of the couches, apparently having grown bored with waiting for Harriet to serve him more bacon, watching The Great Humberto on the television. His five chins wobbled disgustingly as he munched on a bar of chocolate he had taken from the pantry. As the people entered the room, he turned his watery-eyes to them and asked, bluntly:

"Who are you?"

"None of your business," responded Sirius, in a mocking tone. He made a "shooing" motion with his hands, and snapped "Now get off the couch."

The pig-boy (as he was now labeled in Sirius's mind) stared dumbly him for a moment, then turned to his parents, who stood hunched and simpering by the door. They nodded and beckoned him over.

He waddled to them and Petunia wrapped her bony arms around his shoulders...well, she tried to.

Sirius grinned, satisfied, and plopped down on the couch, making sure to upset as many pillows as possible. He stuck his feet on the coffee table and laid out languorously, stretching his arms to reach out behind him, before finally reaching back with them to support his head.

"I have to say, Petunia," he commented offhandedly, as Remus settled down next to him and James and Lily sat down on the couch opposite them, "This is much nicer than prison."

Petunia pushed herself further into the wall, as if hoping it would swallow her whole. Sirius grinned wider and caught his god-daughter's eye to wink at her. He was rewarded with her smile and a small giggle. At the sound, Remus turned to face her with calm eyes and beckoned her over to the couches.

"Come sit down, Harriet," he said, "We have much to discuss." At this point, Harriet gave him a look remarkably similar to the one James gave him when he suggested they abandon pranking for awhile in favor of studying. The look clearly stated, "Are you insane? That has to be the craziest thing I have ever heard!" Harriet's eyes flicked to her Aunt and Uncle and she bit her lip, shyly.

"I'm not allowed to sit on the couch," she told the floor, quietly.

"Well, you are now," Lily told her, trying to keep the venom out of her voice. She patted the spot on the couch in between her and James, prompting Harriet to walk over, cautiously, eyes trained on her Aunt and Uncle. When they made no protests, she sat tensely down on the edge of the couch, on the outside, next to James, obviously ready to jump off at a moments notice. James decided that this was as good as it was going to get.

"Harriet," he began carefully, watching his daughter as she kept her eyes fixed on her worn-out trainers, "What do you know about wizardry?"

Harriet's head snapped up and his daughter's beautiful emerald eyes met James' hazel ones. She seemed surprised by the question, and James couldn't blame her. If four unknown people had shown

up on his doorstep, asking questions about magic, when he obviously didn't know about it, he would have been surprised, too.

"Wizardry? Like magic?" James shook his head in encouragement, so she said "Its not real."

"Not real?" echoed Sirius. "What idiot told you that?" Harriet's eyes darted to her aunt and uncle and Sirius needed no more elaboration. Lily passed a hand over her face and then faced her daughter.

"Harriet," she said quietly, although her voice rang surprisingly loud through the room, "Magic is very real."

Harriet blinked, "It is?"

The golden-eyed man chose this moment to pull out a thin, black stick. Harriet watched, confused, as he took it and gently tapped the cup of chocolate milk that had been left by Dudley on the table. To Harriet's amazement, the glass grew legs and began to dance. Harriet looked up from where the glass was currently doing a tango at the adults surrounding the table.

"How did you-" she stuttered, while the brown-haired man tapped the cup again and made it stop dancing.

"Magic is very real, love" The woman repeated, "and the truth of the matter is-" She was interrupted by the man with the long, black, hair.

"You're a wizard, Harriet." He said bluntly.

"Sirus!" Scolded the gold-eyed man.

"What, Remus?" The man named Sirus defended, "Its true and she needed to know!"

"Yes!" Retorted Remus, "But you could have been gentler!"

"How so?"

"Well, I don't know, but-"

"Stop you two!" Snapped the woman, glaring at them until they fell silent, then looking at Harriet who was gaping openly at the two of them.

"I'm-I'm a wh-what?" She stuttered, openly gaping at the man.

"A wizard," stating the man sitting next to her, glasses twinkling in the light, "Well, technically a witch, but the sentiment is the same. You were accepted into Hogwarts School for Witchcraft and Wizardry. The headmaster gave us your letter a bit early. " He took a heavy envelope out of his inside jacket pocket and handed it to her.

Taking it from him, she looked at the words written on the front in shiny-green ink:

Harriet Lily Potter

The Cupboard Under the Stairs

4 Privet Drive

Little Whinging

Surrey

Flipping it over, she broke the seal, opening it, and pulled out several different pieces of parchment. The first read:

HOGWARTS SCHOOL of WITCHCRAFT and WIZARDRY

Headmaster: ALBUS DUMBLEDORE

(Order of Merlin, First Class, Grand Sorc., Chf. Warlock, Supreme Mugwump, International Confed. of Wizards)

Dear Miss. Potter,

We are pleased to inform you that you have been accepted at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Please find enclosed a list of all necessary books and equipment.

Term begins on September 1. We await your owl by no later than July 31.

Yours sincerely,

Minerva McGonagall,

Deputy Headmistress

Harriet's mind whizzing and whirling in too many different directions to think straight, and she reread the letter several times. Sirius, Remus, and the other two yet-to-be-named adults were patient, giving her as much time as she needed, which was something Harriet wasn't used to, as the Dursleys hated to be kept waiting. After a few minutes, she asked the first question that popped into her head.

"What do they mean by 'We await your owl?'" Remus looked slightly surprised at the question, but he answered nonetheless.

"That is how we-wizards and witches-communicate."

"Oh." She was quiet, struggling to put into words what she was feeling and thinking. Shaking her head, she pressed the letter back into the hands of the black-haired man and said, "I'm sorry, sir, but there must be some sort of mistake. I'm not a wizard...I'm Harriet...Just Harriet."

"Technically, you'd be a witch, not a wizard," Sirius commented offhandedly. Seeing her doubtful expression, he sat up straighter, resting his elbows on his knees, and leaned toward her. Looking her in the eye with an earnest smile, revealing his yellow teeth, on his face he asked, "Well, 'Just Harriet,' have you ever done things you couldn't explain? Made things happen? Maybe when you were scared or angry?" Harriet's eyes widened and the man took that as a yes, sitting back with a self satisfied grin on his face that clearly said 'there ya' go.'

Dudley chose this moment to give off a particularly loud whimper. Harriet whirled around on the couch to face the Dursleys and blurted, without thinking,

"Did you know?" Harriet had lived for a very long time in the Dursley household, long enough to be used to them keeping information from her, but to keep from her the fact that she was witch...

"Knew!" shrieked Aunt Petunia suddenly, almost choking on the words "Knew! Of course we knew! How could you not be, my sister being what she was?"

"My parents were wizards, too?" She gaped, looking at the Dursleys in astonishment. When they didn't answer, merely shoved themselves further into the corner of the room, she turned to face the four strangers on the couch, currently glaring at the Dursleys again. "Were they?"

The man with the glasses grinned at her, an easy-going, confident grin that contrasted greatly with the steely glare he had worn only moments ago.

"Yes, they were." His grin morphed into a smirk, "As a matter of fact, they were an unbelievably talented pair...not to mention smart, good-looking," He began ticking off qualities on his fingers, "popular, brave..." The two other men were laughing loudly at this, apparently in on some inside joke that Harriet did not know about.

The red-haired woman looked exasperated and embarrassed and highly flattered, all at the same time. She gave the man, who was still listing qualities, a hard smack on the arm and rolled her eyes.

"I think she gets it, James." the red-haired woman turned to Harriet, her expression now more serious. "Besides what he," she gestured to the man she had called 'James,' "Just told you, what else do you know about your parents?"

"My parents?" When the Lily nodded, Harriet continued, "My parents died in a car crash when I was a baby."

The silence that followed this statement was deafening. James, Lily, Remus, and Sirius gave the Dursleys glares so cold that if looks could kill, they would have died several times over. Remus schooled his features into a calm mask and turned to Harriet.

"Is there anything else you know about them?"

"I...I overheard Aunt Marge and Uncle Vernon talking one time..." She began, looking at Remus worriedly. When he nodded to show her that she wasn't in any trouble, she added, "They said that my

dad was a- that he was a-a-a rotten drunk," she stuttered. "and that was why the car crashed."

"How dare you," seethed Sirius, hopping off of the couch and lunging at the Dursleys, just managing to be held back by Remus, the anger rolling off of him in waves, "You filthy muggles have let your prejudice blind you so much that you would go so far to hide from Harriet the truth of her parents?"

"Sirius," Lily warned, as Harriet's head reeled: The truth about my parents? What truth?

"No, Lily," snapped Sirius, "I have seen enough to know that these idiots," he spat the word as if longing to call them something more, "have been swallowed by their own fear and stupidity and have hated Harriet-"

"Sirius," snapped Remus, as he watched Harriet pale considerably. She looked tense and was watching Sirius with wary eyes. Sirius turned to her and was wracked with guilt when he saw her fear.

"I-I'm sorry, Prongslette," he whispered, "I didn't mean to scare you..."

Harriet brushed aside the nickname for a minute, and focused on the other things he said. He seemed sincere, as did everybody else, and he was looking at her as if her reassurance that she believed him was the most important thing in the world. She managed a small smile and said,

"It's okay," he sagged against the couch in relief and she decided to continue, stating boldly, "But what truth about my parents?" The adults exchanged glances, seemingly unsure of where to begin.

While they pondered, Harriet took the time to examine each of them. They had given her enough information, at this point, for her to be able to assign a name to each of them. The red-haired woman was Lily. The messy haired man next to her had been called "James." The kind brown-haired man was Remus and the sick looking one was Sirius.

Finally, Remus took a deep breath and began speaking.



"Well, you see, Harriet," Remus said, "Your parents...never really died."

Harriet couldn't come up with an adequate response to this statement, so she just waited for Remus to continue.

"The thing is, Harriet, this all goes back to you being a witch." When Harriet nodded her acknowledgement of the fact, Remus followed up with the statement. "Its important Harriet, that you realize that, just as there are good and bad muggles-

"Muggles?" She said, raising an eyebrow at the funny sounding word.

"Non-magic folk," He explained, face hardening, "Its rather unfortunate that you've grown up with the biggest bunch of muggles I have ever seen, but that was sadly outside of my control." He gave Harriet a small smile, which she returned.

"Now, as I was saying, just as there are good and bad muggles, there are good and bad wizards or witches. Not too long before you were born, there was a war, against a wizard, who had gone as bad as a wizard could go...and his name, was..." He hesitated here, before plowing on, "Voldemort. However, he was so greatly feared that many people-even now, after he is gone-only call him You-Know-Who or He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named. "

"If he was so powerful," interrupted Harriet, nose scrunched in confusion, "How is it that he is gone?"

"I was just getting to that..." Remus said in mock annoyance, causing her to grin sheepishly at him, "Well, a few months before your second birthday, Voldemort was at the height of his power. There were very few safe places left in the wizarding world, one of them being Hogwarts, as Dumbledore, the headmaster, was one of the few people Voldemort was ever afraid of...but more on that later."

Remus paused, unsure of how to explain to Harriet why her parents had gone into hiding without explicitly lying to her about why they had to hide in the first place. Sirius, sensing Remus's hesitance, picked up the story,

"Harriet," He began, causing Harriet to whip her head over to face the man, whom she had figured to be Sirius, as he spoke "Your father and mother were two of the most talented wizards of their time: James, your father, was an unbelievable auror - that's a dark wizard catcher...similar to your muggle policemen, I believe," Sirius added, remembering from his few years of muggle-studies back at Hogwarts, seeing Harriet's confused face.

Harriet, however, wasn't confused over the definition of an auror (although, she had been wondering about that, too). She was recalling when, several minutes earlier, Lily had called the man-with-the-glasses, who was sitting next to her, James, and how the same James had said that he was here to pick up his daughter...She shook her head-she was getting ahead of herself-and focused instead on what Sirius was saying.

"You're mum, on the other hand, worked at St. Mungo's as a healer...err, doctor?" He questioned, looking at Lily to see if he had gotten the comparison right. When she had nodded, he said to Harriet, "The point is that they were both very powerful, which was why Voldemort wanted them on his side."

This, Remus mused, was not a complete lie. Voldemort probably would have loved having Lily and James on his side.

"Your parents, realizing that they were large targets and wanting to keep you safe, went into hiding." Sirius paused, glancing over at the man and woman on the couch next to her. They seemed to exchange some sort of silent message, because both James and Lily shook their heads at Sirius. Harriet didn't have much time to figure out what they were talking about, however, because Sirius continued with his narration.

"They used what's called the Fidelius Charm," Sirius told Harriet, before explaining, "Where only one witch or wizard, called the Secret-Keeper, is able to disclose the location they are trying to protect." Here, Sirius paused again, more briefly, before continuing, "It is a bit more complicated than that, but you get the idea, don't you, Prongslette?"

Harriet blinked owlishly. First at being called "Prongslette" again. Then, because she was trying to digest the information: Her parents

were wizards. They were not drunks. They were fighting in some type of war against an evil wizard. They wanted to keep her safe.

Once the information was processed, Harriet nodded slowly, careful not to agitate her now throbbing head.

"Well, one night, your parents were persuaded to go out and get some dinner. Your grandparents-on your mother's side- came to babysit you. As bad-luck would have it, this was the night Voldemort chose to attack-

"But how did he know where we were," Harriet interrupted, "You said that my parents had that Fidelius Charm-"

"Fidelius Charm," coaxed Sirius, before continuing with a small, sad, smile. "The Fidelius Charm is good protection, indeed. However, it is only as strong as its Secret-Keeper. Your parents...and your parents' friends, I suppose, made the mistake of trusting the wrong person."

"Their friend betrayed them?" Harriet asked, wide eyed. Harriet had never had any real friends (save for Isaura) -How could she with Dudley threatening to beat-up anybody who talked to her?-and, to her, having a real friend would be one of the most amazing things in the world. The idea that somebody would give up having a real friend for the sake of power was one that the (somewhat naive) ten-year old could not understand.

"Yes,' said Sirius, pale features darkening considerably, "He did. He gave Voldemort the location of your house and, as it happened, the night he showed up was the night your parents were out. Your grandparents...your grandparents tried to fight back, to protect you, but they were muggles facing one of the most powerful wizards in history." Sirius choked up here, but quickly went on. "He killed them, that night. But the real mystery is that when he tried to kill you, he couldn't. That scar on your forehead?" Harriet reached up to touch the scar in question, before Sirius continued.

"It isn't from a car crash," he spat these last words. "A scar like that comes only when a very powerful, very evil, curse touches you. For whatever reason, Harriet, Voldemort couldn't kill you that night. That's why your famous, Prongslet. You're the Girl-Who-Lived."

Something very painful was going on in Harriet's mind. As Sirius's story came to a close, she saw again the blinding flash of green light, more clearly than she had ever remembered it before — and she remembered something else, for the first time in her life: a high, cold, cruel laugh. She tried to swallow through her dry throat.

"I-I'm famous?"

"Very," remarked Lily, dryly. "You'll see when you get to Hogwarts."

"Whatever happened to Volde-sorry, You-Know-Who?" questioned Harriet, still trying to piece the story together in her mind.

"Voldemort, Harriet." James gently chided. "Never be afraid to call him by his proper name. And nobody really knows. Some say that he died that night. Others aren't so sure. Some think that he didn't have enough human left in him to die, and that he is out there, waiting, biding his time."

Harriet let out a huge breath, trying to calm her pounding heart. She reached up again and fingered her scar, trying to wrap her mind around the fact that it was given to her by a dark wizard intent on killing her, not in the car crash that killed-

"My parents!" Harriet blurted, remembering why Remus had begun telling the story in the first place. "What does this have to do with them?"

"Well," Remus began taking up the narration once again, "Your parents, as Sirius said, were out when Voldemort attacked. But, they happened to be on their way home when Voldemort attacked. They got home just as Voldemort cast the curse to try and-kill you,." Remus said these last few words hesitatingly, as if the thought of somebody trying to kill Harriet was a painful thought, a concept that was new and amazing to Harriet herself.

"The curse hit them," Remus said slowly, trying to find the best way to explain the (often complicated) mechanics of curses to a ten year-old witch with no prior magical knowledge, "But not directly. They've spent the last ten years at St. Mungo's-the wizarding hospital- in coma like state."

"They spent?" prodded Harriet, hungry for any information about her parents, "So they aren't there anymore?"

Remus shook his head, furthering Harriet to ask another question.

"Well, then where are they now?"

Remus didn't give a verbal answer, instead choosing to look up at the man and woman sitting next to Harriet, whom Harriet had come to know as Lily and James. Harriet turned around the couch to look at them better. They were gazing at her with an indescribable look, which the Dursleys had never given her in the entirety of her stay with them. Harriet's throat suddenly felt even drier than before, as she finally understood what was happening.

"Mum?" She croaked, "Dad?"

The woman let out a choked sound, half laugh, half sob, before launching herself at her daughter. Suddenly, Harriet found herself being wrapped in the embrace of both her parents, something she never thought would have happened. The wetness of her mum's tears, combined with the roughness of her father's clothing, gave it a hot, sticky, sensation, and they were both squeezing her so tight that she couldn't breathe.

But Harriet had never felt more loved in her entire life.

"We are so sorry," her mum whispered, over and over. "We are so sorry." Harriet shook her head, burying further into their clothes, taking a deep breathe to try and keep herself from crying.

"I's not your fault," she muttered. She felt one of them (she couldn't tell who from her position) place a kiss on the top of her head, the first time anybody had ever done that, as far as she could remember.

Naturally, Vernon Dursley had to ruin it.

"Enough," he huffed and, when nobody seemed to hear him, he moved further into the center of the room and yelled, "Enough! I said 'Enough!'"

Both of her parents let her out of their embrace, although they each kept an arm around her, as they gave Vernon cool glares. Sirius and

Remus seemed highly annoyed as well, the latter making sure to twirl his wand casually in his hand. It seemed Vernon was a man on a mission, though, and he showed no fear.

"I've been very generous in letting you have your," he gestured with his hand to indicate their position on the couch, "reunion-thing in my home. But now that you are done, I want you out of my house!"

Harriet got up from her position on the couch, ignoring her parents' (her parents!) protests, to stand in front of her Uncle. She looked up at his mean, red, face. For nine years she had been forced to do what he said, because he said she should be thankful for him and Aunt Petunia taking her in and feeding her and giving her clothing. And she had been, in a way that only a ten year-old brainwashed by her horrid relatives could be.

But they had lied to her.

That anger and hurt, combined with the rather odd empowerment that comes from knowing that your parents are alive (and wizards), caused her to state very quietly, not betraying any of the pain she was feeling,

"You lied to me." Uncle Vernon sputtered, not used to Harriet standing up for herself, before regaining his ground.

"So what?" He choked out.

"So what?" asked Harriet, voice growing louder. "'So what?' You told me my parents died, when they didn't! How could you do that to me? We're family!"

"Family!" Scoffed Uncle Vernon, paling as Remus and Sirius and Harriet's parents stood up from their positions on the couches and Harriet felt somebody put a hand on her shoulder. Looking up, she saw her father (her living dad!) glaring, quite harshly, at Vernon, but nevertheless he kept speaking.

"Just because we may be related by blood to us doesn't mean we owe anything to fre- people like you." Harriet scowled, white-knuckled hands tightly gripping the fabric of her jeans, feeling something inexplicable move within her. Aunt Petunia, fearing the four fully grown wizards in the room, tried to pull her husband back,

but Vernon Dursley was determined. "For ten years, we kept you in this house and fed you and clothed you and gave you a roof over your head! You should'a been bloody grateful, but how do you repay us? With blue-hair and shrinking-sweaters and rogue snakes! How dare-"

Here, Uncle Vernon seemed to swell with anger so great that he seemed unable to speak. But the swelling didn't stop. His great red face started to expand, his tiny eyes bulged, and his mouth stretched too tightly for speech — next second, several buttons had just burst from his blue robe and pinged off the walls — he was inflating like a monstrous balloon, his stomach bursting free of his plaid waistband, each of his fingers blowing up like a salami...

"Vernon!" screeched Aunt Petunia, at the same time as Dudley's scared "Daddy," rang through the room, and Uncle Vernon's whole body began to rise off the ground toward the ceiling.

He was entirely round, now, like a vast life buoy with piggy eyes, and his hands and feet stuck out weirdly as she drifted up into the air, making apoplectic popping noises as he floated into the kitchen.

"NOOOOOOOO!" Aunt Petunia screeched, following him and then disappearing from sight.

The wizards heard, rather than saw, Aunt Petunia seize one of Vernon's feet and try to pull him down again, but from the sounds of her cries, her rake-thin body was no match for Vernon's weight and she too was lifted up into the air and, as her screams grew further and further away, out the back door.

"Get out here!" Her distant voice could be heard calling. "Get out here and put him right!" The adults, at least the males, were too busy laughing to pay any mind to her though and Harriet's mother, while not doubled over in fits of laughter, also looked highly amused.

The rest of the Aunt Petunia's screeches, though, were lost to the wind as both she and her husband floated too far away for the others to hear.

It's a wonder the neighbors didn't see, marveled Harriet, turning to face her mother and father.

"Good job, Prongs," said Sirius through his laughter, "I've been wanting to do that all morning!"

"It wasn't me Padfoot," said her father, having controlled himself a bit.

"It wasn't?" questioned Sirius, confused. He turned to Lily, "Lil's? Moony?" Then turning to Remus when Harriet's mother answered in the negative. When Remus also shook his head, Harriet's father chuckled and turned to Harriet, raising an eyebrow and telling her, in a joking manner,

"You have some explaining to do, young lady." The other adults grinned at her as well, but Harriet was highly troubled.

"I did that?" She asked wide eyed, only to whip her head around at the sound of running footsteps, just in time to see Dudley waddle quickly up the stairs. This was followed by the slam of the bedroom door. She turned back to the adults.

"Yup," said her father, laughing once again, only to stop at the look on Harriet's face. "Whats the matter, Prongslette?"

"Am I...am I in trouble?"

"Trouble," echoed her father, "Why would you be in trouble?"

"I did something bad," Harriet said guiltily, looking at the floor, "I was a freak."

"A freak-," Her mother paused and took a deep breath. "Who called you that, love?"

"Aunt Petunia and Uncle Vernon." Harriet paused for a second, adding "And Dudley, but he only does that 'cause they tell him to."

"Harriet," said Sirius softly, once again kneeling down to look her in the eye. "You are not a freak. You are a normal, wizarding child."

"I am?" Hope colored her voice, as she hardly dared believe what Sirius and her parents were trying to tell her.

"You are." Harriet considered the point.



"Do normal wizarding children blow up their uncles?"

Sirius let out a laugh, before grinning softly at her and ruffling her already messy hair.

"Not exactly, but they do do accidental magic. Do you know what that is?" Harriet shook her head 'no.'

"When an untrained wizard-like you- feels particularly strong emotions, sometimes their magic gets away from them. Its entirely common and usually celebrated by wizarding families. But don't worry," he added, "it should stop once you get to Hogwarts."

"Oh. Ok." Harriet looked at the man kneeling next to her and was suddenly hit with a realization.

"Not to seem rude, sir," she began, and when he nodded to encourage her, she asked "but who are you?" She had figured out his name from what had been said between him and the other adults, but she honestly had no idea why he was here with her parents.

"Who am-" He let a new bark of laughter and gave her a wide grin. "I'm Sirius Black, sometimes called Padfoot by my friends. I'm also," and here, he lowered his voice conspiratorially, as if he was sharing some big secret, "you're godfather."

"Really?"

"Really!" he beamed, jumping up from his position. He reached towards Remus and pushed him towards her. "And this," he gestured to the brown-haired man, "is your honorary Uncle Moony, or Remus Lupin, as some call him."

Harriet stared up at him for a minute, before finally saying the first thing she could think of.

"Hi." He gave her a small smile in response, answering her.

"Hello, Harriet."

"Oh my," exclaimed Harriet's mom, looking at her watch. "We have to get going! Dumbledore is waiting for us!"

"But wait," Harriet exclaimed, as she was ushered out of the living room, "Whats going to happen to Uncle Vernon?"

"You're honestly worried about him?" Questioned her father, eyebrows raised as if doubting her sanity. When she shrugged, he answered "Well, most likely they will send some Ministry workers to deflate him and erase the memories of any muggles who saw him."

"Erase their memories?" Harriet wondered aloud.

"Yes," said her father, hastening to add "Don't worry though, it won't hurt them at all."

"Now come, Harriet," her mother told her, "Let's grab your things and leave, hm? We have some people waiting for us. Where is your room?"

The four adult wizards held their breath here. This was one of the moments they had been waiting for. On Harriet's letter, it was written that she slept in the cupboard under the stairs, but all them couldn't help but hope that this was some sort of mistake or misunderstanding.

These hopes were dashed, however, when Harriet walked quietly to a small door and under the stairs, opened it, and crawled inside. James and Lily exchanged a quick glance before following her, both of them just managing to stick their heads inside.

It was small and cramped, that much was at first obvious, but the Dursleys had somehow managed to fit a thin, threadbare cot inside, but there were no pillows or blankets. Harriet was currently on the floor, attempting to reach somethings under the bed. Rather than feel any anger towards the Dursleys, all Lily could feel was a deep, painful, sadness, causing tears to come to her eyes.

"Harriet," she asked, "have you slept here your entire life?" Harriet came up from under the cot, answering as she moved.

"Yea," she turned to face her mother and, eyes narrowed, hesitatingly asked "Are you ok?" With some shock, Lily realized that she was crying, so she hastily wiped the tears from her eyes.

"Yes, love," She replied, forcing a smile, "I'm fine. Its just the dust, is all." Harriet looked doubtful, but nevertheless went back to gathering her things. James gave his wife's hand a light squeeze with his own, before slowly retreating outside the cupboard.

Turning to face his friends, their expressions were as serious as his own, and they looked at him expectantly.

"Well," demanded Sirius, as James composed himself.

"It was her bedroom," James whispered, not yet able to come to terms with it, "Apparently for her entire life."

"Those f-" Remus took his hand and quickly clapped it over Sirius's mouth, wanting to protect the innocent ears not too far from them. Sirius, taking advantage, then let loose a string of what Remus and James figure to be a mixture of expletives, threats to the Dursleys, and promises to go out and buy Harriet all of Diagon Alley.

"You can't buy Diagon Alley, Sirius," said Remus with mock impatience, once Sirius calmed down, although his own anger evident in his voice "Its not for sale." Sirius opened his mouth to retort, but was cut short by Lily and Harriet as they exited the cupboard, Harriet carrying a large bag.

"What have you got in there, Harriet?" Her father asked.

"Clothes," Harriet said, opening up the bag to reveal the faded clothing inside. Her father reached in, pulling out a grey-t-shirt. Harriet raised her eyebrows, I could have sworn that thing was white when Aunt Petunia bought it.

"Er," her dad hesitated, "a bit big for you, isn't it? Then again," he joked, "I'm not up to date with all the muggle fashions these days." Harriet let out a small laugh shaking her head.

"No, its big, but it used to be Dudley's. All of my clothes are hand-me-downs from him or Aunt Petunia."

Remus reached into the bag, this time pulling out a faded and dirty yellow-skirt.

"Sirius," He said, as he held the scrap of cloth away from his face, pinching it between two fingers, as one would something particularly disgusting.

"Yes, Remus?"

"What you said? About Diagon Alley?"

"Yea?"

"I'll help."

Sirius smirked, "Knew you would come around."

"Alright, alright," sighed Lily, "Enough joking around. We need to get going."

"You mean we're really leaving?" asked a wide-eyed Harriet. Both of her parents exchanged looks.

"Yes," affirmed Lily, "we are going to our new home. Remus has furnished it for us. We promise, you'll love it." Harriet couldn't really think of what to say. She had dreamed of leaving the Dursleys' for years, but she never thought that it would actually happen.

"We are leaving the the Dursleys', pequenina?" Isaura asked and Harriet visibly jumped. She had been so wrapped up in the idea of her parents being alive that she had forgotten about her friend! Her father, misinterpreting her action, looked at her worriedly.

"Is that okay?" he asked. Harriet was surprised at being asked her opinion, but nodded.

"Only if Isaura can come," she said, more bravely than she actually felt. What if they said no? Could she honestly abandon her new friend?

"Isaura?" asked Remus, confused. Harriet reached down and carefully pulled up her pant leg. She heard her mother let out a gasp, but ignored it, instead continuing to pick up the small reptile in her hands. Isaura slowly unwound herself from Harriet's leg, twisting herself on Harriet's slender wrist, instead.

"This is Isaura," Harriet paused hesitantly at her parent's (and Remus's and Sirius's) faces, but continued, "I got her at the zoo. I didn't take her on purpose," Harriet defended herself, "but she said she wanted to come with me and wouldn't let go of my ankle!"

"You said that she "said" that she wanted to come with you," said Sirius slowly, to which Harriet nodded. "So you can talk to snakes?"

"Yea," said Harriet. Suddenly, her eyes widened. "Does that have anything to do with my being a witch?"

"Yes, love," her mum told her, sounding wary, "but I wouldn't go telling too many people about it."

"Why not?" Harriet couldn't help but grow a bit frantic. "Is it bad?"

"No," James told her quickly, swallowing down his fear of his daughter being a parselmouth, for Harriet's sake. There had never been a parselmouth in his family as far as he knew, so he couldn't help but wonder where Harriet got it from. "Being a Parselmouth," (So that's what it's called, noted Harriet) "is a special skill and one that you should be proud of for having." Harriet nodded, relieved, and gently stroked Isaura's head.

"Come on," said Lily, after a moment's silence. "We best be going."

Harriet was led out of the house, walking through the doorstep of Number 4 Privet Drive for, hopefully, the last time in her life.

AN: Thanks to everybody who's been checking out my story and reviewing it and subscribing to me! I really appreciate it, especially since this is my first story!

AN (2): I'd like to thank Fabi for her advice (and her review!). I went through and edited it, but let me know if I missed anything. I appreciate you telling me because, even though my mom is Brazilian, my Portuguese isn't the best, so I got the translation for baxinha off of the internet (gotta love Google, right?). :-)

Please review!

tinyrose65

Wisteria Walk, Little Whinging, Surrey- June 30, 1991

Harriet blinked at the bright sunlight as she emerged from the house. It had been awhile since she had been outside the house-unless, of course, you counted earlier this morning when she had gone to take out the trash, before the sun had fully risen.

"Come on, Harriet," said her father, holding his hand out to her. She took it and he lead her forward down the driveway.

"Where are we going," she questioned, looking up at her father and mother, who was standing on her other side.

"We are going to see an old friend of ours, Prongslette," said James, grinning, "I think you might know her. Then, we are going to Hogwarts."

"The place in my letter," Harriet prodded. Her mother nodded at her, before looking at Sirius and Remus, both of whom were currently bickering with each other and walking just a bit ahead of them.

"You can't call her 'Figgy' anymore, Sirius," snapped an exasperated Remus.

"Why not?" demanded Sirius, "I did when I was younger...it was cute!"

"It might have been considered 'cute'-to use your words- when you were younger," retorted Remus, "But not its just plain rude! You're a fully grown man!"

"That is debatable," said James loudly, butting in on the discussion.

"No, it isn't!" cried Sirius. James, seeing his friend's distraught expression, turned to wink at his now giggling daughter.

Harriet was so busy laughing at her father and godfather that she failed to notice that they had now arrived at their destination. The door in front of them swung open, startling Harriet out of her reverie and revealing-

"Mrs. Figg," she cried astonished. The old woman smiled at her, although looking supremely agitated, fixing the cap on her hair as

she did so. Isaura, already smelling all the cats which were on the other side of the door, quickly hid herself in the sleeve of Harriet's oversized grey sweatshirt.

"Hello, dearie," said Mrs. Figg, before turning to her parents. "It took you long enough," she snapped, now fussing with her shawl. "Come in! Quickly, now. Before the neighbors see!"

The group entered the house, Mrs. Figg closing the door behind them. Harriet took in the familiar living room: tan walls, musty smell, old couches that were surprisingly soft...and the cats, of course.

"Mrs. Figg," asked Harriet cautiously, once the elder woman seemed to have settled down a bit, "Are you a witch, too?" That seemed to be the only explanation that made sense, especially since her parents had referred to her as an "old friend."

"A witch!" laughed Mrs. Figg, "Good heavens, no! I'm a squib."

"A what?" Wizards have some funny sounding words, Harriet thought to herself.

"A squib, Harriet," said Remus, choosing to answer, "is a person who was born from a magical family, but possesses no powers of their own."

"Oh," said Harriet. After thinking for a moment, Harriet asked, "Is that why you always asked to babysit me for Aunt Petunia and Uncle Vernon?"

"Sharp as a tack, that one," said Mrs. Figg to Harriet's parents, who beamed proudly at her. Turning back to Harriet, she said "Yes, dear. Dumbledore assigned me here so I could watch over you."

"Dumbledore?" frowned Harriet, trying to remember where she had heard the name before.

"He's the headmaster of Hogwarts, love," said Lily, gently. "and an old friend of ours."

"Exactly," nodded Mrs. Figg, "However, he bade me only observe, never interfere. Unless, of course, the Dursleys' ill treatment of you grew...excessive."

"I think," said Lily, barely keeping her temper in check, "that we might have passed the point of "excessive" when Harriet was forced to live in a cupboard under the stairs."

Mrs. Figg looked winded.

"Lily! James!" she gasped, slowly setting herself down on the couch, hand to her heart. "I assure you that I had no idea!"

"We know," assured James, although he did not sound as happy about the idea of Harriet living in a cupboard any more than his wife did. "and we don't blame you. We know that you would have notified Dumbledore had you any idea of what was going on in that house."

Harriet frowned, confused at to what she was overhearing. What was wrong with her cupboard? Besides the fact that it did grow a bit small at times, she liked it, as it provided her a safe haven where the Dursleys were not able to bother her.

"I'm sorry, Mrs. Figg," offered Lily, knowing that it must not have been easy for her to stand by and watch, but to do nothing. "Its been a difficult few hours. Do you think we could get on our way to Hogwarts?"

"Of course, Lily," said Mrs. Figg, "The Floo Powder is on the mantle. But before you go!" Mrs. Figg rushed quickly out of the room (almost tripping on her calico, Miss Pickles) and Harriet heard her rummaging around in the closet down the hall. She came back a minute later, holding out a leather-bound book to Harriet's father. He took it from her, confused.

"Its a photo-album," she explained as he opened it, revealing the several different pictures on the first page. "I always knew that when you woke up, you would want to see what you missed, so I made sure to take plenty of pictures of Harriet growing up!"

Harriet's father closed the book. "Thank you," he told Mrs. Figg, before reaching over and giving her a hug. She seemed surprised, but did her best to cover it, patting him awkwardly on the back and then pushing him lightly away.



"Well, then," she sniffed, clearing her throat, "you best be going now, or Dumbledore will have my head!"

Shooting the older woman a smile Harriet's mum walked over to the fireplace and took a small bag from the mantle. Reaching inside, she was able to pull out a handful of fine, powder. Harriet was curious, but decided that it wasn't worth the risk of getting her mother angry by asking her a questions. In the course of the morning, Harriet had already asked her mother more questions than she ever had in her entire life with the Dursleys. Harriet saw no absolutely need to push her luck.

Her mum, however, seemed to know what she was thinking and turned to her.

"Now," she said, smiling, "it is safe to assume that you have never traveled by Floo before, have you, Harriet?" Harriet shook her head 'no.'

"Well, wizards and witches travel using the Floo Network. The Floo network connects most wizarding homes and buildings and can be accessed by using a fireplace." Here, Harriet looked doubtful, so her mother elaborate further. "You take some Floo Powder," she gestured to the glittery powder in her hand, "And throw it into the fireplace. The fire will begin to burn bright green, meaning that you will be able to enter the fireplace without being burned. Then, all you have to do is clearly state your destination."

"Simple, really," laughed Sirius. Seeing his goddaughters hesitant expression, Sirius said "Maybe I should demonstrate, Lils. Just to calm her down?"

"Sure," said Lily, handing a handful of the powder to her friend. Sirius took it and threw it into the fireplace. At once, the flames burst into a brilliant shade of green, causing Harriet to jump backwards in shock.

"Easy there," said her father, placing a steadying hand around her waist. Harriet thought nothing else could have surprised her that day, but was proven wrong when Sirius walked into the flames, as easily as if that sort of thing happened everyday.

"Bye, Figgy!" He proclaimed, with a large wave to the now fuming woman.

"Don't call me that, Sirius Black!" she shrieked, but it was doubtful that he even heard her because, with a cheerful "Dumbledore's Office" and a rush of bright green light, he had disappeared.

Harriet was left speechless.

"Harriet," said her mother, "Why don't you Floo with me, the first time? Would that make you feel more comfortable?"

Hesitantly, Harriet nodded, walking towards her mother. Her mum took a handful of Floo Powder, before handing the rest to her husband. Saying goodbye to Mrs. Figg, she threw it into the fireplace and the pair walked into the flames. Harriet was surprised that the fire didn't feel warm at all. Instead, it provided a rather pleasant tickling sensation.

"Hold on tight," warned her mother, so Harriet around and tightly hugged her mother, practically pinning herself to her side. Her mother placed a hand on her back and said, firmly, "Dumbledore's Office!"

The green light was suddenly blinding. Harriet found herself spinning around and around and around, the only real thing in her mind was the hand her mother still had on her back. The air was whooshing around her and she was getting so dizzy-

It stopped.

Dumbledore's Office, Hogwarts-June 30, 1991

Harriet tumbled out of the fireplace, the sudden stop having caused her mother to lose her grip, and straight into the firm body of somebody else, who reached out and steadied her.

"Woah, Prongslette," and Harriet was reassured with the sound of Sirius's voice, "You okay, there?"

Harriet nodded, looking over her shoulder just in time to see her father step through the fireplace. Sirius's voice, once again, made her look back at him.

"Takes a bit of getting used to, doesn't it?" Harriet nodded emphatically, making Sirius laugh again, and Isaura, on par with Harriet's feelings about the new mode of transportation, had Harriet's wrist currently in a death grip, just as Remus appeared through the Floo.

"So this," a soft voice came from the other side of the room, forcing Harriet to whip her head around and finally examine the odd room she was in, "is Harriet."

Harriet was left facing an old man of questionable age, but, despite that, his eyes twinkled and Harriet couldn't help but feel a great energy about him. This might have had something to do with his opulent dark blue robes, which seemed to have actual stars dancing across them. They would have seemed out of place anywhere else, but they fit in well with the richly adorned room Harriet was now in.

The man moved from behind his desk walking up to Harriet. Harriet gave him a small smile, unsure of what she should do. She needn't have worried, though, for the man did nothing but place a weathered hand on the top of her head and sigh.

"It's been almost ten years since I saw you last, Harriet." It was here that his blue eyes began to twinkle, "My, how you've grown." He removed his hand and gestured to the couches, urging the quintet to sit down.

"Sir," Harriet questioned as she sat down, "you knew me when I was a baby?"

"Oh, yes," answered the man, standing in front of them "In fact, it seems like just yesterday that you five were sitting on those very couches." Harriet thought she saw the twinkle in his eye vanish for a moment, but she must have imagined it for it was back, full force, a few seconds later. "But that, is for another time." He smiled at her, before turning around suddenly and taking something from his desk: a small bowl.

"Lemon-drop?"

Harriet was so surprised that she visibly gaped at the man, before snapping out of it. She cautiously reached into the bowl and pulled

out one of the candies, waiting to be reprimanded, as she would've been back at the Dursleys' house. When he didn't say anything however, Harriet whispered "Thank-you."

None of the adults took the candy, so Dumbledore placed the bowl on his desk (but not before taking one for himself). He took a seat on the couch opposite them.

"Now, Harriet," he began, "I am sure you are wondering who I am." Harriet looked up at him from the lemon drop she was currently unwrapping because, as it turned out, that had been exactly what she had been wondering.

"I," he continued, "am Professor Albus Dumbledore. I am the headmaster here, at Hogwarts."

"Oh," Harriet wasn't sure what else to say to this. Of all things she was expecting Professor Dumbledore to be, she was not expecting him to be an eccentric-looking old man. "Its nice to meet you, sir."

"I will not waste your time with pleasantries," said Dumbledore, speaking not only to Harriet, who was now sucking happily on her candy, but the entire room, "I am sure you would all like to be on your way home."

"Actually, sir," requested James, in a tone that offered no room for argument, "We were hoping to have Madam Pomfrey have a look at her before we leave. Is she here?"

"I believe she is," answered Dumbledore, peering at them over his half-moon glasses, "However, I can't help but wonder if there is any specific reason as to why you wish to see her?"

"The Dursleys," said Lily, "were not nearly as kind to Harriet as you imagined."

"I see," Dumbledore sighed, regret darkening the twinkle in his piercing blue eyes, "Perhaps, another time, we could have a longer discussion and see what actions might be taken against them. But, for now, I am sure Madam Pomfrey would be more than happy to help you. Before you go, however, there are several things we much discuss. Your living arrangements-"

"All taken care of," interrupted Remus, just a bit impatiently. "Potter Manor has been cleaned, newly furnished, and, thanks to the help of several of the other Professors here, heavily warded. They can move in anytime they wish."

"Good, good," said Dumbledore, nodding towards his former student, "You have done an excellent job in preparing their home. Then again, I expected nothing less when I first assigned you the task." He paused here, letting his eyes rove over the group, before pausing on Sirius. "My concern now is where Sirius shall live." Sirius frowned, realizing that he had yet to consider that, himself. "You spent the night at the hospital wing in the care of Madam Pomfrey, did you not, Sirius? Am I right in assuming that you do not want to spend the rest of your life living there?"

"Yes," laughed Sirius, then he waggled his eyebrows in a suggestive manner, "the Hogwarts hospital wing is not exactly an appropriate place to bring the ladies home to-" he stopped short, remembering Harriet's presence and, feeling Lily's glare on him, finished, quite pathetically, "converse with."

Harriet's mother glared, her father tried not to laugh, and her "Uncle" Remus snorted. Remus walked up and placed his hand on friend's shoulder.

"Well I hope that my flat is a place you consider conducive to "conversation,"" he smirked, "with the ladies, because I insist you move in with me."

"Moony, I couldn't possibly-" Sirius went to protest, but Remus waved it away.

"Shush, Sirius. As luck would have it, I have an extra room and my flat has been feeling quite empty, as of late."

"Thank you," Sirius said, sincerely, after a moment.

"No thanks necessary. For ten years I have been deprived of your company. Thats a lot of time to make up!" Remus gave his friend a mock wary look. "Not to mention, of course, the service I would be doing to society." Sirius raised an eyebrow.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean," Remus said solemnly, "I shudder to think of the dire consequences that would occur if you attempted to cook."

Even Harriet's mother was unable to hide her laughter at this, although she tried desperately to cover it with a fake cough.

"I'm sure," said Dumbledore chuckling, "that the wizarding world appreciates your sacrifice, Remus. As will Madam Pomfrey."

"Whose Madam Pomfrey?" interrupted Harriet, worriedly looking at her parents. Professor Dumbledore seemed nice enough (and he was a friend of her parents, it seemed, which was important), but she had not yet heard enough of this 'Madam Pomfrey.'

"She's the healer who runs the hospital wing," assured her mother, running a hand through Harriet's perpetually messy hair, doing nothing to tame it whatsoever, "Don't worry. She's very nice."

Harriet nodded, still not completely convinced, but deciding to take her mother's word on it for now. Seeing both of her parents stand, she quickly followed suit, although she wasn't sure of where they were going.

"It was nice meeting you, Professor," Harriet repeated, slightly embarrassed and unsure of what else to say. If the professor noticed, he didn't act like it. Dumbledore merely gave her a small smile, looking utterly calm from his seat.

"It was a pleasure seeing you again, Harriet. I will be see you at the start of the year feast at Hogwarts, if not sooner." He held out his hand to her and Harriet reached out with hers to shake it. Isaura chose that moment to stick her head out of Harriet's sleeve, thoroughly confused as to what was going on. Dumbledore's hand jerked back, but, to his credit, he quickly calmed himself down.

"This is Isaura," Harriet told him awkwardly, not sure of what else to say, "my friend."

"Harriet," said Lily softly to her old professor, who was looking at the snake with surprise (an emotion Harriet got the sense that he didn't feel often), "can speak Parseltongue."

"I see," Dumbledore muttered, cautiously reaching forward and stroking Isaura's head with a gnarled finger. She hissed in pleasure, loosing her grip on Harriet's wrist. "You, Harriet, have given me much to think about."

Taking that as a dismissal, the group began to head for the door. Harriet gave him one last small wave, before following her parents out the archway and down the steps.

Harriet Potter, Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry-June 30, 1981

Once she reached the bottom, she found herself in a large corridor. She blinked, taken by surprise. The stone walls and floor were both dark grey, but the flaming torches lining the walls kept it from looking ominous. Even from the one hallway where they were, Harriet could tell that Hogwarts was huge. Harriet's father chuckled, seeing her face.

"Yea," he said, "that was my reaction, too."

"Welcome to Hogwarts, Harriet," grinned Remus. Her mother took her hand (the one without Isaura) once again and lead her down the halls, the others following behind them. The passageways were numerous and confusing, winding and twisting in all different directions. They passed by several different staircases (one of which, Harriet would have sworn moved) and too many doors to count.

At one point, they passed a large window. Harriet stopped, stunned. Walking over to it, she looked down at the land below: green fields, rolling hills, and a vast lake.

"Wow," she grinned. Isaura once again poked her head out of her sleeve and, seeing the landscape, gave a soft hiss in agreement. Harriet grinned at her, knowing Isaura would be very happy hunting on Hogwarts's grounds.

"Beautiful, isn't it?" smiled Lily. Harriet nodded at her, then turned to continue walking. Despite the intricacy of the corridors, her parents and their friends obviously knew it well and navigated it easily.

"Don't worry, Harriet," said Sirius breezily, when she brought up the point, "Once you start, you will get to know this place like the back of

your hand." He smirked, "We might even be able to get you a map." Remus and her dad chuckled a bit, although Harriet's mum looked a bit confused. For once, Harriet wasn't the only one not in the joke.

"Did that picture just move?" gaped Harriet, eyeing a portrait of an old man in a large, purple bow-tie, who then proceeded to tip his hat to her.

"Sure," laughed James, "Why? You didn't expect it to hang around doing nothing all day, did you?" Harriet didn't say anything, not sure what to expect anymore. This day was, so far, nothing at all like she would have guessed. A part of her still thought it might be some sort of elaborate prank by the Dursleys, to teach her a lesson.

Harriet was so busy looking at everything (she had actually wandered quite a bit ahead of her parents, although she was careful not to go the wrong way or wander so far that she couldn't see them) that she did not pay attention to where she was going and found herself bumping into somebody.

"Oh," she cried, as she fell on the floor. Picking herself up to sit on her knees, she looked up through her crooked glasses to see a tall man sneering at her. He had greasy hair, a hooked nose, and sallow skin. She opened her mouth to apologize, but somebody called her name.

"Harriet? Are you okay?" Standing up completely, she looked over her shoulder to see her mum, dad, Remus, and Sirius walking quickly towards her. She gave them a small smile to show that she was okay, only to once again face the pale man, who was now glaring at her fiercely.

"I'm sorry, sir," said Harriet, unsurely, "I wasn't watching where I was going. Are you alright?"

"Harriet Potter," the man sneered, as an answer, "Not even a first year and already strutting about the school like you own it. Why am I not surprised?"

"I'm sorry, sir," repeated Harriet, this time more confusedly and slightly angry, "But do we know each other?"

The man opened his mouth to answer, but he was interrupted.



"Snape." Harriet felt her father's hand on her shoulder, "I'd say it was a pleasure to see you again, Snivellus, but I'd be lying." Harriet had never heard her father's voice sound the way it did, except, maybe for the time he talked to the Dursleys. Then again, Harriet hadn't known her father for very long.

"Potter, Black," sneered Snape, who had paled at the sound of the name her father had called him, but in anger, not fear. "Lupin, I-" he stopped abruptly, his voice taking on a different tone. "Lily!"

Harriet's mother had arrived on the scene and Harriet watched curiously as her mother looked at Snape with an odd expression.

"Severus," she said, quietly.

"I thought you were-," Snape was quiet, unable to finish his sentence.

"Never going to wake up?" asked Lily softly, green eyes never wavering from her old friend.

"I heard the rumors," he said abruptly, "but I never thought that they were-" Again, he seemed unable to finish. Lily didn't say anything, waiting patiently for him to gather his thoughts. She felt her daughter's worried eyes on her and gave her a small smile. Next them, Sirius watched, tense, as if waiting to pounce if Snape did anything. All he did was sigh, though.

"Can we talk?" he pressed, "Privately?"

"I don't know-" Lily began.

"Please?" beseeched Snape, though his expression never changed, "It will only take a few minutes." Lily sighed and nodded. When her husband went to protest she quieted him.

"Its fine, James. Why don't you and Sirius and Remus take Harriet down to Madam Pomfrey and get started without me? I'll be there soon." James nodded sharply and, fixing Snape with a hard glare, he and his two friends carefully lead Harriet towards the hospital wing, once again. Harriet turned around, giving her mother a small

wave, which was returned, before they turned a corner and were gone.

Snape opened the door to an empty classroom. "We can talk in here." Nodding, Lily walked inside, followed by Snape as he closed the door behind them.

Lily Potter and Severus Snape, Empty Classroom, Hogwarts-June 30, 1981

The pair stood in the dusty classroom, an awkward silence permeating the air, which neither of them wished to break. Lily, being the Gryffindor, went to speak first, but Snape beat her to it.

"I'm sorry," Snape interrupted the beginning of her speech, knowing that if he didn't get it out now, he never would, "for calling you a you-know-what, becoming a Death Eater...all of it!"

"Severus," sighed Lily.

"No!" interrupted Snape, "I know what you are going to say! But Lily," here, he walked towards her and looked her straight in the eye, "I thought you were gone. For the past ten years, every mistake I've every made has come back to haunt me every second of everyday. You have no idea what it was like, knowing you were almost dead because of me-"

"Because of you?" Lily's eyes narrowed, "You were the one in the pub that night-"

"I tried," said Snape desperately, as Lily moved away from him, "I tried to stop him, as soon as I realized it was you-"

"But you would have left my husband and daughter to die?" retorted Lily. She expected him to argue against the accusation, but instead, he simply bowed his head.

"I won't deny it."

"Severus," repeated Lily and this time he did not interrupt, "You were my best friend for so long. You taught me about magic and wizardry and Hogwarts. You were there for me when Petunia began to shun

me." Lily took a shuddering breathe, "But you became a Death Eater-"

"As soon as I realized what I had done," interjected Snape, "I went to Dumbledore! I began working as a spy for the Light!-" Lily continued over him.

"You betrayed my family to Voldemort," she shook her head at his objections. "You have no idea," she said slowly, "How much I want to forgive you. But, after everything, I don't think I can." She turned away and made to leave, but was stopped by a hand on her arm.

"But I love you, Lily," pleaded Snape, reaching out to grab her. She shook him off.

"I'm sorry, Severus." She spoke softly, knowing that any louder and she might start crying, "But I just can't believe that. Not anymore." Snape, in a fit of sheer desperation, pulled out his wand and pointed it to the door.

"Expecto Patronum!"

Lily was brought up short by the silvery-figure that now stood between her and the door: a doe, almost identical to her own patronus, was looking back at her. Lily took a trembling hand and reached out, as if to touch it. When she did, the doe shimmered for a moment, then dissolved into the air.

"Its you, Lily," said Snape quietly, looking everywhere but her. "Its always been you."

"Severus," said Lily slowly, turning around in order to face him, "I never meant to hurt you, believe me."

"Then forgive me, please!" said Snape, sounding far more weak and pleading than he had in years, something he would do only for the red-haired witch in front of him. "Give me a second chance to have you in my life!"

"No, Severus!" Lily snapped, perhaps a bit too harshly. She saw the hurt on the face of the man in front of her (the same man who used to be her best friend) and she softened. "There was a time when I could've felt the same way, but things have changed. I have a family,

now- a daughter and a husband, both of whom I love with all my heart." A combination of hurt and anger seeped into her voice. "There is no way I could possibly do what you are suggesting-"

"I'm not suggesting," interjected Snape, "that you be anything more than my friend, again. I rather have you as my friend than not be in my life at all!" Snape had imagined this conversation many times in his head before, when he had imagined Lily finally waking up from that blasted "sleep." He had known, from the start, that there was no possibility of Lily leaving her family for him. She wouldn't be the Lily he loved if she did that. It had taken time, but he had eventually come to terms with the fact that, if Lily ever woke up, he would rather take her friendship over nothing.

Lily walked up to him and took one of his hands in hers, looking him directly in the eye. Neither spoke for a few minutes, as Lily seemed to search for something in his expression, which was just as inscrutable as ever. Whatever it was, she apparently found it, for she gave his hands a brief squeeze.

"I forgive you, Severus," she said, choosing her words carefully, "but be warned. You have one chance. That's it."

"That's all I'll need," said Snape quickly. "I'll prove it to you, Lily. I've changed." Lily nodded slowly, a small smile coming to her lips for the first time since she had entered the classroom.

"I'll hold you to that," she said. She let go of his hand and he let it drop to his side. "I would love," she told him, "to stay and talk to you, but my daughter is currently in the hospital wing and I need to be there with her, right now." Snape nodded.

"I understand," he said, truthfully. It was, after all, such a "Lily" type thing to do, so he tried to keep the hurt out of his voice, even though she was leaving to go be with Potter and his spawn. She heard it though, and smiled knowingly, slightly proud of his attempt.

"It's been ten years though," she smiled, "and I'm sure I have missed a lot. Perhaps, one of these days, we could get together for lunch? Maybe you could catch me up?"

Snape nodded, trying to keep the smile off his face, although even he couldn't keep the corners of his lips from twitching traitorously upwards.

"Until then," he told her. She gave him one last smile (Oh! How he had missed that smile!) before retreating quickly out of the classroom. Snape, however, could do nothing but fall into one of the chairs, placing his head in his hands.

He was more exhausted than he had ever been.

Hospital Wing, Hogwarts-June 30, 1981

Lily opened the doors to the hospital wing and blinked. She had forgotten how white it was. Glancing around, she finally saw Remus, Sirius, and her husband huddled near a bed, around which the curtains were drawn. Sirius currently held Isaura in his hands, just a bit cautiously, but the snake seemed to be on her best behavior. As Lily walked quickly over to them, she idly wondered if that was something that her daughter had requested. Remus was the first to notice her.

"Lily," he greeted. James whipped around, almost falling over backwards when he realized how close his wife was to him.

"Lily," he exclaimed, much more loudly than Remus, only to be 'shush'-ed by the werewolf. "Are you alright?" he asked at a lower volume.

"I'm fine," she assured him, "Where is Harriet?"

"She's behind the curtain," answered James, looking over his wife carefully, clearly not believing her. "Poppy gave her a pair of pajamas to try on. Are you sure you are alright?"

Lily cupped her husband's cheeks in her hands and laughed slightly. She smiled at him.

"I am fantastic," before he could protest, she was quick to assure him, "I'll explain everything later. For now, let's just focus on our daughter." James nodded and, after Lily gave him a quick kiss, the couple turned to Remus and Sirius, both of whom were doing a horrible job at pretending not to be eavesdropping.

"I'm fine, you two," said a still smiling Lily, assuring them both, "No need to listen in- and you call yourself Marauders!" She teased. The two men visibly relaxed and gave her a sheepish grin, ashamed at being caught.

"I'm done!" A tiny voice interrupted the adults and a small hand shot out of the curtains, holding a small pile of clothing out. Lily took them from Harriet, while James and Remus worked on opening the curtains up. Harriet sat on top of the sheets, clothed in the regulation Hospital pajamas, waiting patiently. The pajamas, which fit much better than her other clothes, only served to highlight how thin she was, and as she finished pulling the shirt down, the adults were able to get a glimpse of several bruises they had yet to see before.

"Are you okay?" Harriet asked, worried. The four wizards (her mother having returned a few minutes earlier) were looking angry at something and Harriet couldn't help but wonder if it was something that she had done (as was usually the case at the Dursleys').

"Just fine, Harriet," smiled her father, seemingly calmer than the others. He slowly reached over to the bed where she was sitting and pulled the sheets back for her. "Get underneath the sheets. That way, you won't get cold while you wait for the Madam Pomfrey to look you over."

Harriet goggled at him for a moment, unable to comprehend the fact that somebody actually cared about her enough to worry if she got cold, before quickly wiggling underneath the warm sheets, feeling instant relief at the comfort they provided. She let out a relaxed sigh as her mother made sure she was all tucked in.

"Relax, Harriet," she said gently, "Madam Pomfrey should be back in a few minutes."

"Where did she go?" questioned Harriet, having taken an immediate liking to the stern, yet nice, healer.

"She went to go check her stores for some salves and potions," explained Remus. Harriet looked up at him, eyes alight with curiosity.

"Potions?"

"Yes, dear," said Lily, "In the wizarding world, potions can work similar to Muggle medicines. Of course, they can do plenty of other things, too. You know my friend, Severus, the man you just bumped into?" The Marauders blanched at hearing Lily call Snape a friend, but Harriet nodded, remembering him.

"He didn't seem to like me" she informed her mother, who just smiled gently at her, eyes guarded.

"Its not that he didn't like you, love," her mother informed her slowly, seeming to think for a moment, "he just had a lot on his mind when you bumped into him." Harriet recognized when information was being kept from her, but decided not to press the point just yet. " You see, he works as the Potions professor, here at Hogwarts."

"Really?" asked Harriet, trying to sit up, only to be forced down by her father, who tutted softly at her. "Can he teach me?"

"Well," laughed Lily, "thats his job."

"You'll learn loads of other stuff, too," said James, quick to try to move onto a topic where he would be able to employ language suitable for ten year olds. "Like Charms and Transfiguration-my best subject- and Care of Magical Creatures and Quidditch-"

"Quidditch isn't a class, James," admonished Lily, although her lips twitching gave away her amusement.

"Lily is right," agreed Sirius, who had, at this point, given Isaura back to her rightful owner. Harriet and her mum and dad and Remus all stared at him, astonished that he was actually agreeing with the red-haired witch. "Quidditch is so much more than a class!" Her mother rolled her eyes, so Harriet took the chance to ask, rather hesitantly, "What is Quidditch?"

Both Sirius and her father looked as if they had never heard anything more awful in their entire lives, something that Harriet found both funny and worrisome. Their eyes widened and they looked as if they were in danger of fainting.

"What is Quidditch?" her father gasped out, over dramatically, placing his hand to his forehead and making a huge show of almost falling over backwards in shock. "Its only the best sport in the world!"

"Then how come I've never heard of it?" asked Harriet. Remus chuckled.

"It's a wizarding sport only, Harriet," he informed her. She nodded in realization, feeling a bit stupid for asking a question when the answer seemed so obvious. Maybe the Dursleys were right and she shouldn't ask questions. Then she realized that the Dursleys were all a bit stupid and they had never really been right about anything before and her parents had not once admonished her for asking questions today. Thus, she decided to take advantage of it and asked the next question that popped into her head.

"How do you play?"

"Well," began Sirius, eager to explain it to her, only to be interrupted by a stern voice.

"Don't you dare, Mr. Black!" Madam Pomfrey had entered the hospital wing, walking purposefully towards them. She had in her hand a piece of parchment, along with several different vials, each containing some sort of oddly colored liquid. "I need to examine Harriet and I can't have you prattling away about Quaffles or Beaters or that oh-so-amazing-stunt you pulled in your sixth year or some other such nonsense while I do it!"

"It was my seventh year," he mumbled, looking highly put out. Harriet giggled at him as the nurse placed her items on the table next to the bed. She stopped short at the sight of the snake that Harriet was currently stroking, but, at the pointed look from both Lily and James, the nurse quickly regained her professionalism. She gestured for Harriet to come up from under the sheets and began to talk as Harriet sat up, handing her snake over to her startled father. Her godfather snickered at her dad's startled face, gleeful at how karma often worked, since James had been laughing at him earlier for his fear of the small reptile.

"Alright," said Madam Pomfrey, "am I right in guessing that you have never been examined by a healer in a wizarding fashion?" Harriet shook her head 'no,' so Madam Pomfrey explained, "Well, it's simple really. I won't even have to touch you-just scan you. I'll wave my wand over you," she gestured to the wand in her hand, "and the results appear on the parchment." She pointed to the parchment on



the table. "I give you potions and anything else you might need based on the results."

Harriet, nodded, not really sure what was about to happen, but trusting her parents enough to know that if they had brought her to Madam Pomfrey, then they must have really needed her to do this and that Harriet should sit still. Harriet gave another nod, more firm, and Madam Pomfrey took her wand and pointed it at her. A soft blue light shot out of out and covered her, making Harriet gasp. She felt a hand grab hers and shot a grateful smile at her father, before looking again at Madam Pomfrey, who was working to direct the light up and down her entire body.

"Done," she announced to a relieved Harriet. The blue light vanished and Madam Pomfrey placed her wand back in her robes. She picked up her parchment and began to read it, her smile getting smaller and smaller with each passing minute. She tutted softly and sighed, giving Harriet a sad look, which Harriet recognized immediately as pity, which made her squirm.

"Is everything all right?" asked her mum, worried, while Sirius helped Harriet back under the covers. The young witch reached over and took back her snake, wanting to feel the familiar comfort of having the smooth body in her hands. Madam Pomfrey seemed to think of the best way to answer her mother.

"The scans show quite a few...problems. Severe malnutrition, several cuts and bruises,-but those can be fixed easily enough-breaks that never healed properly, bruises, cuts, a few burns. There are signs of a concussion, she's behind on all her vaccinations...honestly!" cried a distraught Poppy, "Did those Muggles ever even take her to a doctor?"

"I doubt it," said Harriet's father grimly, while her mother began running her hand through Harriet's hair (a sensation that Harriet found she rather liked).

"Well," sighed the witch, "as I said earlier, I can fix up her cuts and bruises before she leaves here today and make sure that all of breaks are properly set. I can also make sure that she isn't suffering any ill effects from the concussion."

"What can we do?" demanded Remus.

"Well, she'll need to be started on a regimen of nutrient potions, which I can set up for you to give her every time she eats. Make sure to give her good, healthy, meals, along with plenty of rest." The nurse paused, adding, as an afterthought, "And love. As corny as it sounds, love does wonders for children in cases like this."

"I can assure you," her mother said, "that one won't be a problem."

On the bed, Harriet followed the proceedings only half-heartedly. Her chest had an odd feeling in it: as if it was filled by a large, warm balloon. She had honestly never been this happy in her entire life. Never-not once!- had the Dursleys had a conversation like this about her, where her needs and her problems were discussed, instead of Dudley's. Nobody had cared enough. Her hands gripped the blankets of the bed and Harriet was surprised to note that the reason her vision had gone so blurry was because tears had welled up in her eyes.

Isaura, seeing her young mistress's distress, urgently hissed, "Isss eeverything allriight, pequenina?" Harriet quickly nodded, trying to discreetly wipe her tears from her eyes, but her father noticed.

"Harriet," he questioned anxiously, "are you okay? Are you in pain?" All eyes were on her as she shook her head rapidly.

"Do you mean it?" she asked, with hope so raw that it almost hurt. "Do I really get to come stay with you?"

"Oh, Harriet," sighed her mum, sitting on one side of the bed and pulling her close to her, "of course you do."

"We are sorry," her father told her, moving to the other side of the bed, "that you had to live with those gits"-

"James!" scolded her mother, giving her father a sharp look. Her dad rolled his eyes at her, but amended his statement nonetheless, although he made sure to shoot a smirk at Harriet when her mum's back was turned.

"We're sorry that you had to go live with them," he repeated, "but I promise," and here, his tone became fiercer than Harriet had ever heard it, "that you will never have to go live with them again." Then,

for the second time that day, Harriet felt herself being swept up into a tight hug from both her parents, Isaura hissing her protest at being caught in the middle, as her godfather and "uncle" watched on, grins on their faces.

Potter Manor - June 30, 1991

Harriet blinked as she stepped out of the fireplace once again, this time, her father's arm holding her tight against his side. After their impromptu bonding moment in the hospital wing, Madam Pomfrey had finished her examination and prescribed Harriet several different potions regimens, some nutritive and others not. The kind nurse then allowed the group to Floo to their new home using the fireplace in her private quarters. Harriet wasn't thrilled about the new means of transportation, but suspected that it would have been much worse had her father not volunteered to go with her.

One dizzying moment later, Harriet found herself standing in one of the most nicely furnished living rooms she had ever had the pleasure of being in. The room was large, but the combination of dark wood furniture, plush couches, and soft carpets made it look much more cozy than it could have been.

"Moony did a good job, didn't he?" Her father asked her, leading her away from the fireplace so that the others wouldn't run them over. Harriet simply nodded, taking in the large house. She could see that a large doorway led from the living room into what looked to be the main hallway of the house, which, from what Harriet could see, lead to the front door, kitchen, and a staircase to the second floor, where the bedrooms most likely were. Isaura, curled around Harriet's neck this time, eyed the large windows greedily, no doubt imagining the lazy afternoons she could spend curled up under them, sunning herself.

"Oh, Remus," came her mum's voice from behind her, "you did such a fantastic job!"

"Thank you, Lily," responded Remus, "I hoped that you would like it."

"Like it?" questioned Harriet's father in a tone that clearly meant he worried for his friend's mental health, "You've restored Potter Manor to its original glory!"

"It almost makes me expect to see Andrew and Elizabeth offering to make us a snack," Sirius said with a melancholy smile, "like they used to when we were home from Hogwarts for the holidays."

"My parents would be proud," James reported, to his now sincerely touched best friend.

"Why don't we take a look around the rest of the place?" suggested Lily. "Then, we could eat some lunch." Turning to her, Harriet's mum said, "How's that sound, love?"

Harriet nodded, "If you show me where the kitchen is, I can get started on cooking while you look around."

"You-?" Lily stared at her daughter before shaking her head rapidly. "No! You misunderstood! I'm not asking you to cook lunch for us! I was wondering if you would like me to cook some lunch for you!"

"But, why?" started Harriet. The Dursleys always made her cook for them. She saw no reason for it to be any different here, even though her parents had shown more kindness to her in a few hours than the Dursleys did in their entire lives.

"Harriet," her dad said in a tone that indicated that he wanted her to listen very carefully, "we are your parents. That means we take care of you, not the other way around." Harriet went to protest again, but her father shook his head. "No buts. You will have chores, of course, but none that are not appropriate for your age. Do you understand?"

Harriet nodded slowly, as if she did understand. Although she didn't..not really.

"Well," her dad said, clapping his hands together in an attempt to redraw everybody's attention and break the awkward silence that had befallen them. "Why don't we give you a tour of the rest of the house?" He added, jokingly, "I haven't been here in over nine years, though, so forgive me if I get us lost."

Her mother rolled her eyes, "Then maybe we should let Remus lead?" she pointed out. "He was, after all, the one who furnished it. I think he should do the honors." Remus went to protest, but Sirius shut him up by giving him a good hard nudge towards the main hall.

"Alright," he said with an exasperated sigh, shooting a glare at his friend, although it was clear that he didn't really mean it. "This is the living room," he began unsurely.

"I never would have guessed," Harriet quipped, before realizing what she had said, and clapping her hands over her mouth, horrorstruck. Before she could apologize to Remus, though, she realized that the adults were laughing, not angry.

"Your cheek," said her father in a proud voice, looking affectionately at his wife, who gave him a small smile.

"Fair enough, Harriet," chuckled Remus, redirecting her attention. "Perhaps we should move onto the rest of the house?" From that point, Remus was much more confident, Harriet's joke having broken the ice. She was lead through the first floor of the house, shown a spacious and well equipped, kitchen, an elegant formal dining room, and a more casual (but just as nice) dining room meant for the family. The extensive library was also on the tour and, upon seeing it, Harriet couldn't help but smile wistfully, imaging how many hours she would have spent reading there, if she were allowed.

"Something tells me you will be spending a lot of time here, Harriet," Remus said, seeing her face. Harriet blanched.

"You mean I'm allowed?"

"Of course you're allowed," her father informed her cheerfully, although something darkened in his eyes. Harriet gave him a huge smile, which he returned.

"Not now, though," said Sirius, gently. "We still have to tour the rest of the house." Harriet let herself be lead away from the library, giving it one last wistful glance before turning the corner into the foyer.

"Upstairs," Remus explained to the group, as he began climbing the steps, "Are four bedrooms, two of which are yours, the other two are guest bedrooms. There are bathrooms adjoining each room, along with the separate partial bathroom downstairs-

"Yes, Moony," sighed Sirius, as they reached the landing. "We all know that."

"Harriet doesn't," Remus retorted, as the young witch in question waited patiently for Remus to continue. They walked down the hall, ignoring the first two doors, as Remus explained. "The first two bedrooms are the guest bedrooms," he stopped at the end of the hall, where two doors were located across the hall from each other, "and the two bedrooms at the end of the hall belong to you and your parents. I thought you might like to be close to each other, especially after all these years."

Her mum and dad reached for the larger door, indicating the master bedroom, and opened it. Peering inside, Harriet couldn't help but be impressed even further with Remus's taste. Unlike the living room, the furniture, including a wardrobe, dresser, and desk, was a caramel colored wood, and the lightly patterned bedding on the four-poster bed and the similarly colored carpets, along with several different windows and lights and lightly tanned walls, served to make it open and airy.

Both of the eldest Potters smiled at their friend in the hall and closed the door.

"It's lovely, Remus," Harriet's mother told him, giving him a kiss on the cheek as a thanks.

"It is," nodded her father, then, adding, more seriously, "but I'm not kissing you."

"Noted," smirked Remus, before turning to Harriet.

Harriet glanced hesitantly up at the door labeled Harriet's Room, unsure if she should open it. At the encouraging faces of the adults around her, she reached for the doorknob and turned it slowly, unsure of what she would see.

She had to bite back a gasp.

The room was larger than even Dudley's first room at the Dursleys' and at least twice as nice. The walls were a blue so dark that were almost grey, contrasting greatly with the cream curtains surrounding two large windows, located in a nook at the opposite end of the room. The large windows in question were equipped with a lovely pair of window seats, cushioned with bright floral pillows, making it perfect for sitting and looking out at the grounds surrounding the

house. Opposite one of the window seats, in a small section of wall in the nook, was a large mirror, the exact height needed for a girl to stand in front of to choose her outfit for the day. Also in the nook were white-shelves, originally a bookshelf, but which Remus had transformed into shelves holding more toys than Harriet had ever seen.

If the small nook was lovely, then the rest of the bedroom had to be the most wonderful place Harriet had ever seen. The bed was soft and inviting, with its soft white-bedding (trimmed with grey) and large, plush pillows. On the side of the bed closest to the door was a small bedside table, equipped with a lamp and a small drawer. Against the wall of the opposite side of the bed (closer to The Nook, as Harriet had begun to call it in her mind) was another bookshelf, black, this time, crammed tightly with a mixture of books ranging from reference to textbooks to pleasure reading.

A small desk sat near the wall in front of the foot of the bed, along with a matching chair. There was a small beanbag chair stored underneath it, within Harriet's easy reach. Remus had apparently had the forethought to stock it with pens and pencils and paper, which Harriet was familiar with, but he had also added different size pieces of parchment and what looked like an old feather quill and an ink-well. A small tree was placed beside the desk for decoration. Above the desk, mounted on the wall, there was a group of white picture frames, most of which were empty and waiting to be filled, but one of them had a picture of both her parents, Sirius, and Remus, that Harriet recognized to be from their wedding day.

"This is mine," she gasped, taking a few hesitant steps into the room, letting her look more closely at the tree next to the desk. It took Harriet a minute to realize that it was real, littered with several blooming flowers and what looked to be butterflies.

"Yes. I wasn't sure what you'd like," Remus said quietly, misinterpreting her expression. "If you don't like it, we could change-

"

Harriet shook her head rapidly. She had no plans to change the bedroom anytime soon. Her mum giggled at her enthusiasm.

"Well, Moony," Sirius smiled, "I think you did well." Remus rolled his eyes and watched Harriet for a moment. She had taken Isaura and

placed her the base of the tree. The snake quickly wound herself around it and climbed up to one of the branches, a small butterfly flitting to another perch, and and let out a his of pleasure, just as pleased as her mistress was with their newfound home.

"Ill thhiiink, pequenina," she hissed, "thhaat we wiill beee verrry happy heere."

Looking at the picture of her newfound family smiling on her parent's wedding day, Harriet couldn't stop the smile that over took her face.

"Yes," agreed Harriet to herself, as her picture mother blew her kisses and her father waved to her, unaware of the rabbit-ears Sirius was making behind his back as Remus tried to stop him, "I think we will."

AN: Okay, so there is that chapter. I hope you enjoy it. Just a quick note on Snape-some people might think that he is a bit OOC here, and he sort of is. But keep in mind that Lily (his best friend, the girl he loves, and whose "death" was partially his fault) is alive. How would you react? Snape might be an idiot about some things, but he is not stupid. I always thought that, if given the chance to do everything over, Snape would take advantage of the opportunity, regardless of the fact that he could only be friends with her and would have to watch her be married to his mortal enemy. But he'll still be Snape: grouchiness and sarcasm and all. Don't expect for him to start handing out teddy-bears anytime soon.

Anyways.

Thanks, as always, for your positive responses!

Please review!

tinyrose65



Lily and the Marauders, The Kitchen, Potter Manor-June 30, 1991

Leaving Harriet to explore her room for a bit, Lily, along with Remus, James, and Sirius, headed downstairs to the kitchen to prepare lunch. Lily didn't really know how much food was in the house, so she wasn't quite sure what she would make. However, Harriet had assured her that she would eat whatever was on her plate, so Lily didn't really have to worry about that. Reaching the kitchen, Lily headed straight for the various cabinets, opening and closing each of them in turn in order to gauge which foods she would be able to make. She was pleased to see that Remus had gone grocery shopping for them as well.

"I think that its safe to say that we won't be going hungry anytime soon," she chuckled, reaching into the refrigerator to get some slices of bread so that she could get started on sandwiches. "Does grilled cheese sound alright?"

"That sounds great," assured Remus. Sirius and her husband were oddly silent, though, so, once she had turned the stove on, she turned worriedly to them. They, along with Remus, were sitting on the stools pushed up to one of the kitchen counters. They were watching her expectantly.

"What?" she demanded, hands on her hips, waiting for the pan to be hot enough for her to grill the sandwiches.

"You never told us," said Sirius, never one for tact, especially when the case called for it, "what happened in the classroom between you and Snivellus."

"Snape," Lily stressed. "Say it with me, Sirius, 'Snape.'" Sirius rolled his eyes and gave her a pointed look, which she promptly ignored by turning around and getting started on the first sandwich. She heard a sigh behind her and the sound of a chair being pushed out. A few seconds later she felt hands wrap themselves tightly around her waist and a chin rest itself on her shoulder.

"Lily," murmured her husband voice next to her ear. She abandoned the sandwich and moved her body so that she was facing him. He looked down on her, face clouded with worry. "We just want to make sure you are okay."

"I am okay," she assured him, "Severus and I had a long conversation, the details of which you don't need to know," she gave him a pointed look, "and I've decided," she began a bit slowly, knowing her husband would not take too well to what she was about to say, "to give him another chance-"

"Lily!" sputtered not James, but Sirius. "Are you mental?" he demanded, glaring at her. "He's a Death Eater!"

"Was," corrected Lily, leaning slightly so she could face Sirius from around James, who was still holding her tightly. "He turned spy after we..." she trailed off. "He was my best friend for years. The least I can do is give him another chance."

"Lily," began James, hesitantly, but his wife stopped him.

"Don't try to change my mind," she snapped, glaring at him with a fire that instantly brought him back to their Hogwarts days, when they were young and she hated him. "Don't you trust me?"

"I trust you," James was quick to assure her. "It's him I don't trust."

"Neither do I," scowled Sirius. He gave Lily a searching look. "It must have been some pretty convincing evidence to have you trust him like that."

"It was," she informed the room, ignoring Sirius's tone. "Although, I still don't trust him completely-"

"Then how can you ask us to?" James asked her.

"I'm not asking you to trust him," informed Lily, smiling at him and bringing her hands up over his shoulders to clasp around his neck. "I'm just asking you to give him a chance." James looked at his wife's face and caved, nodding a bit reluctantly. Sirius grumbled something incoherent and Remus, the one Marauder who held no personal grudge with Snape, simply nodded his assent. Lily smirked, knowing that her next conditions would be a bit harder for them to follow.

"That means no insults, no taunting, no pranks-"

"Aw, Lil's," pouted Sirius.

"Do it for Harriet, if for no other reason," beseeched Lily, knowing that asking the Marauders to be kind to Snape was as unlikely as Voldemort expressing the desire to be a ballerina, but knowing that they (the Marauders, that is, not Voldemort) would do it, given the proper incentive.

"What does this have to do with Harriet?" asked James, looking down at his wife.

"Harriet needs as many people bolstering her confidence as possible," said Lily. "You heard what Madam Pomfrey said. The last thing Harriet needs is to take Potions with Snape and have him hating her the entire time just for being associated with you three. Something that you know he will do if the things between you three stay the way they are." The three men in question looked sheepishly at each other. Lily took a deep breath, "If the prophecy is true, Harriet needs all the friends she can get and Snape is a powerful ally to have."

"Don't bring that blasted thing into this," snapped James. "It isn't going to happen. We won't let it!"

"You don't know that for sure," countered Lily, feeling her throat close and her heart beat hard against her chest at the thought of the fulfillment of the prophecy. "We can try, but there are no guarantees. Its better to be safe, rather than sorry."

The three men exchanged glances, silently communicating, something they had learned after years of knowing each other. Sirius and James seemed reluctant but Remus shrugged.

"I say its Lily's call. She knows Snape better than all of us. If she says he has changed, than I, for one, believe her." Sirius and James grimaced at their friend's careful logic, something that they normally enjoyed for getting them all out of trouble, but hated when it incriminated them or forced them into something they rather not do. Lily, sensing she had won, smiled at them.

"You may not like him, but if you can at the very least be cordial to him, it will make Harriet's days at school a lot easier, especially if she is sorted into Slytherin."

"Harriet won't be sorted into Slytherin," scoffed James. "She'll be in Gryffindor." Seeing his wife's look he added, completely truthfully, "Not that it matters, of course. I'd love her no matter what."

"Right," agreed Sirius, taking a sip of the Firewhiskey he had taken from the fridge for himself and his friends; Remus had opened his, but was just running a finger idly up and down the glass and James had yet to even look at his, "but she'll be in Gryffindor."

"Are you sure?" asked Remus, raising an eyebrow at his friend. He seemed to have seen the same thing Lily had. "When was the last time you ever heard of a Parselmouth in Gryffindor?"

Dead silence filled the kitchen.

James let go of his wife and held out his hand. Sirius, understanding, reached out and managed to hand James his Firewhiskey. James took a large sip as he sat down.

"It doesn't make any sense," frowned James, trying to fit the facts together in a way that made sense, but failing every time. "There are no Parselmouths in the history of my family, nor," he said glancing at his wife, "I am assuming, yours." She shook her head.

"It isn't good." muttered Sirius.

"Are you saying it matters?" demanded Lily, hands on her hips. "That it will make you look at her differently? Love her differently? Think-"

"What?" gasped Sirius, "Of course not! I don't give a rat's hat about whether or not she can talk to snakes!" Lily tried to apologize, but Sirius cut her off. "You know how ridiculously prejudiced the wizarding world is, though! The minute they find out she can speak Parseltongue, they will label her as some sort of evil wizard! Next thing you know, they will be calling her the next Voldemort-!"

A small gasp cut off Sirius's rant far more effectively than any loud bang could. Every head in the room whipped around to the doorway of the kitchen where Harriet stood frozen, wide eyed and trembling.

"Harriet," began Lily, but Harriet interrupted, sounding slightly hysterical.

"I'm sorry," she squeaked, terrified, "I didn't mean to overhear, I promise!"

"Harriet," said James this time, a bit more worried about his daughter.

"I just smelt something burning and I wanted to make sure everything was okay!"

"Burning?" frowned Lily. She whipped around to notice that the sandwich she had put on the stove was, indeed, burning. She worked quickly, turning off the stove and moving the pan to the sink, dousing it with water.

"Harriet," James said loudly, effectively startling her enough to calm her down. She blinked away her tears. "Come here," he beckoned to his lap, speaking firmly, but gently. Harriet walked over to him hesitantly. When she got close enough, James picked up his daughter, doing his best to ignore the way she flinched, and placed her on his lap. He put his arms firmly around her.

"Calm down, Prongslette," James ordered, but not raising his voice. "You aren't in trouble and we aren't mad." Harriet stopped squirming and looked up at him, green eyes shining more than usual.

"You aren't?"

"No," informed Lily as she walked closer to them and knelt down, so she was looking her daughter in the eyes. "We aren't. We just want to know how much you heard." James held his breath. The last thing any of them wanted was for her to have heard about the prophecy.

"Just the last bit," she whispered. "About how talking to snakes is bad." She shook her head rapidly. "I'm sorry! I didn't know! I won't do it anymore, I swear!"

"Harriet," shushed Lily, "talking to snakes is not bad."

Harriet blinked. "But Sirius said-"

"You misunderstood, Prongslette," informed Sirius gently. "Talking to snakes is not bad. It just has a nasty reputation in the wizarding

world." It was clear from Harriet's expression that she didn't quite see the distinction.

"Harriet," Remus began, speaking softly. Harriet turned to him expectantly. "What would you say if I told you that I was a werewolf?" Harriet gaped at him for a moment, unsure of how to respond.

"What?" she finally managed to get out. Remus chuckled as the others watched, curious as to where he was going.

"It's true. I'm a werewolf." At Harriet's wide eyes, Remus hastened to explain that he was perfectly normal every other day of the month, calming her down. "That being said," he told her firmly, "if you ever see me as a wolf on the full moon, get away as fast as you can. I would never hurt you intentionally, but I cannot control myself as a wolf. Are we clear?" Harriet nodded, then bit her lip.

"Why are you telling me this?"

"Well, Harriet, I'm telling you this because the wizarding world doesn't have a very positive view of people with my...condition."

"Why not?"

"Because," the man sighed, looking tired, "in the past, werewolves haven't lived past their reputation and really proven themselves to be more than what people think they are: beasts. Many have been seen as cruel, bloodthirsty, and barbaric."

"But it's not fair!" Harriet protested. "You aren't any of those things!"

"I appreciate the vote of confidence," Remus smiled at her, "but sadly the wizarding world isn't as accepting. Do you understand what I'm trying to say?" Harriet's face scrunched up in concentration.

"Wizards are idiots?" she asked, perfectly serious. James threw his head back and laughed loudly, making her jump, while Sirius snickered.

"Not exactly," Remus informed her, amusedly. "My point is that the wizarding world is a highly prejudiced place. Just because they view a certain ability as dark or evil, doesn't necessarily mean that the

person who possesses that ability is. An ability is only as dark as the wizard who uses it, if that makes sense."

"Like me being a Parcel-Parsel-"

"Parselmouth," finished James. "and exactly. Just because you can talk to snakes, doesn't mean anything, as long as you use it well. Just be yourself and try your hardest. If people find out about your ability and start saying things, hold your head high and remember who you are."

Harriet nodded and James pressed a kiss to her head. "Now, lets go to the kitchen," he said, easily scooping her up and getting off his chair. "Its well past time for you to eat something."

Harriet Potter, Potter Manor- July 13, 1991

Since the few weeks that Harriet had arrived, life at Potter Manor had settled down into a comfortable rhythm. Both Sirius and her father had began working as Auror's for the Ministry. Since they had been away for so long, they would work for one year under a senior Auror on a trial basis, after which, if everything went well, they would be able to take on their proper titles as fully fledged dark wizard catchers.

As for her mum, she had gotten back her job at St. Mungo's, although she only worked part time, usually for a few hours after dinner, once her father had come home. Her mum planned on going back to work full time once Harriet was settled at Hogwarts. Harriet could tell that her mother loved her job and, currently, she worked at the Maternity ward of the hospital. However, she hoped to eventually be moved to where she had been working before: the "Emergency Room," of sorts.

Remus had managed to find a job at a small bookstore not too far from his house. When he had first begun looking, Sirius had offered to help him find a job at the Ministry, who was doing their best to keep him happy in hopes that he wouldn't sue them for wrongful imprisonment, but Remus declined. Less than a week later, Remus stumbled upon a tiny bookstore that dealt in the sales and restoration of rare books. The owner was an old wizard (Sirius speculated that he was older than Dumbledore himself, judging by the length of his beard) and his wife, both of whom were more than

happy to hire Remus, even after learning of his condition. Remus's job was to catalog the books as they came, but the owner had assured him that, with some training, he would eventually be able to repair some of the damaged books as well. The pay was minimal, but it was more than enough for Remus.

As for Harriet, she found herself happier at Potter Manor than she ever had been at the Dursleys. Both of her parents cared attentively for her, making sure that she had all of the proper food, clothes, and even toys. They had gone on shopping trip the day after she had arrived, during which she had gotten plenty of new clothes, from shoes and socks to jeans skirts. Her father had wanted to take her to a place called "Diagon Alley," but Harriet's mum had suggested they wait until Harriet got settled in and her father agreed.

Harriet had yet to accept that the treatment was permanent and not just some elaborate trick, but her parents were patient, never getting angry with her when she did something wrong, such as ask questions. Nor did they get angry when she did something freaky (although it was one of the rules of the house that she was never to refer to herself or another wizard by that name again). When she had accidentally turned her father's knight into a brick while they were playing chess and it fell onto his finger, after the initial bout of swearing, punctuated by her mother's scolding (of him, not her!), her father had joined both Moony and Padfoot in laughter, while her mum waved her wand and transfigured the chess piece back to normal.

Magic was something else that Harriet was slowly getting used to. For the first few days at Potter Manor, her parents had tried to keep the magic to the minimum, letting her get used to the idea of being a witch, before they began showing her basic spells. Both of her parents had explained a bit more about magic, including some of the classes at Hogwarts, basic spells, means of transportation and communication, some basic wizarding etiquette, and (much to her mother's amusement) Quidditch. Her father had wanted to get her on a broom right away, but her mum convinced him that it would be better to wait until Hogwarts, where she could learn with the rest of her classmates, since first-years weren't allowed brooms, anyway.

Harriet had eventually stopped jumping every time somebody used magic, although she still couldn't get used to seeing somebody's



head come out of her fireplace. Or using their new owl, Numair, to receive and deliver mail.

In all honesty, it was hard to get used to any aspect of her new life.

But things at Godric's Hollow were going well, until one day when Harriet's mum got a call from St. Mungo's.

"Is everything okay?" Harriet asked, looking up from her book (a biography detailing the lives of influential witches throughout history, it had been recommended by Remus, and Harriet found herself thoroughly enjoying it). Isaura, curled as usual around her ankle, hissed curiously.

"They need me at St. Mungo's," she sighed, passing her hand through her hair. "Apparently Cindy, who works the day shift, came down with a nasty cold and they can't find another replacement. The only problem is your father isn't back for another few hours."

Harriet looked down at her shoes. She hadn't meant to make things so difficult for her mother.

"Hey," her mother lifted Harriet's chin up with her finger. "It'll be okay. If I can't find anybody to watch you, I can just tell them no."

"You could leave me alone," pointed out Harriet. "That's what the Dursleys did."

"I don't care what the Dursleys did," Lily informed her daughter, making her giggle. "I'm not going to leave you here on your own." She frowned for a minute, thinking, before snapping her fingers. "I know who might be free!"

Severus Snape, Spinner's End-July 13, 1991

Severus Snape stood hunched over the counter in his personal potions lab, carefully cutting up the ingredients for his next brew. This particular potion was delicate work, so he felt that his anger was justified when a small bell rang, signaling somebody calling him on the Floo, startling him, thus causing his finger to slip and for him to cut the piece of aconite far too short than what he needed.

Growling, he quickly wiped his hands before storming out the lab (although not slamming the door since that was never a good thing to do in a room full of delicate and highly volatile potions ingredients), ready to give the person on the other end of the Floo a piece of his mind.

"What?" he barked, as he approached, not bothering to see who it was.

"Severus," he blanched when he saw that it was Lily. "I've interrupted you brewing, I see." Snape attempted to apologize, but Lily wouldn't let him. "Its fine," she interrupted. "I know how testy you get when you are brewing. May I step through for minute, though?"

Resisting the urge to tell her that he did not get testy, he stepped aside and, a few seconds later, Lily Potter stood in front of him, brushing some soot off of her robes. She looked up at him and smiled, although her hair was a bit ruffled, as though she had run her hand through it a few times, worriedly.

"How are you?" she asked politely. He couldn't help but ponder that question. It had been awhile somebody had asked it of him.

"As well as could be expected," he informed her. "And yourself?"

"Fine," she assured him. "How is your potions work coming?"

"I assume you didn't Floo here to make inquiries about my work," he remarked dryly, choosing not to tell her about the very difficult potion she had interrupted. Had it been anybody else, he would have railed at them for hours and taken the grudge to his grave, but with Lily, it didn't matter.

"No," Lily's expression turned sheepish. "I was hoping that you wouldn't mind doing me a favor?"

Snape's first reaction would be to agree immediately, but he forced it down. He was, after all, a Slytherin and it would be rather foolish of him to agree to something before he found what he was agreeing to.

"It depends on the favor," he replied smoothly, "but I will see what I can do."

"St. Mungo's just Floo called me," she began, "apparently they are short a healer."

"And they have asked you to fill in their position."

"Exactly." Lily nodded, tucking a wayward strand of her red hair behind her ear. "The only problem is that I can't leave Harriet home alone, but James, Sirius, and Remus are all working and won't be home for another few hours-"

"You are asking me to babysit?" he drawled. He didn't know whether or not he should be insulted.

"Not babysit," she protested. "Just watch her!" Personally, Snape didn't see the distinction, but nodded politely, as if he did. "I can't leave her home on her own!"

"She's eleven, Lily," retorted Snape, suddenly remembering how much he had missed bickering with Lily. He had yet to find a verbal sparring partner on par with her level. "I spent more than my fair share of days home alone at that age."

"Are you saying that Harriet should be brought up in the way you were?" Lily snapped, crossing her arms over her chest and glaring at him. Snape opened and closed his mouth, speechless for a moment, before settling on a scowl. As much as he disliked the Potter brat (no doubt she was as arrogant as her father was at her age), no child deserved the upbringing he did. Not even the spawn of his most hated enemy.

"Please, Sev!" continued Lily, when she saw that her once best friend was breaking down a bit. "Only for a few hours! I promise she won't be any trouble!"

Maybe it was the fact that Lily's words had brought up unwanted memories of his parents. Maybe it was her large, green eyes looking imploringly at him. But most likely it was the use of his old nickname. If she noticed the effect it had on him, she made no comment.

"Very well," he sighed, pinching the bridge of his nose. "I'm brewing though, so don't expect me to entertain her."

"You won't even know she is here," Lily sighed, relieved. "Let me go get her."

Snape gave her his best glare, which she ignored, as she stepped calmly through the Floo. As he was pondering the power Lily's eyes had over him, the woman in question stepped through the Floo, her daughter in tow.

At Hogwarts, Snape had not gotten a very good look at the brat (he was too busy staring at Lily and glaring at the idiots who called themselves the Marauders), so he allowed himself the opportunity to do so now.

She was small, he noted, smaller than either of her parents had been at that age, and not just in height. It was clear she was woefully thin as well. She had inherited her father's hair (for this, Snape allowed himself to feel a bit of sympathy for the girl) and his...face, albeit more feminine. There were traces of Lily in the lips though, along with a bit in her nose and cheeks; and maybe a drop of it in her chin. Her eyes, though, were the most Lily part of her; just as green as her mother's.

Snape was brought out of his reverie by Lily introducing them to each other.

"Harriet," she began, "this is my friend, Professor Severus Snape. He works at Hogwarts remember?"

The girl nodded, looking up at him curiously. He met her gaze with a sneer, making her blush and look to her shoes.

"Hello, sir," she murmured, surprisingly shy. He had expected her to flout all authority by calling him by his first name, maybe even giving him a hard kick in the shins for good measure.

"Hello, Miss. Potter," he drawled, trying to keep his tone as civil as possible. It would do no good for him if he managed to make the brat cry within her first minute of knowing him. Lily knelt next to her daughter.

"Severus is going to watch you while I go to work for a bit," she informed her daughter, who nodded. "Be good," she instructed. "He was working, so it was very nice of him to offer-" Severus snorted, at

which Lily glared. He schooled his features back into their passive mask. "-to offer to watch you. Do as he says and read your book, okay."

"Yes, mum." Harriet nodded. Lily smiled and gave her daughter a kiss on the forehead.

"I love you."

Harriet beamed. "I love you, too!"

"I appreciate this," said Lily, after giving her daughter one last hug and walking over to him. Snape merely glared at her, annoyed at her having gotten him in this position. She laughed at him.

"Chin up, Sev! I know children aren't your strong suit, but who knows! You might get along." She gave her daughter, who hadn't moved from her spot, although was looking around the house curiously, a sidelong glance. "You have more in common than you think you do."

Before Snape could ask what that meant, Lily placed a kiss on his cheek, making him incapable of any coherent thought.

"Thank you," she told him, but before he could make any response, she was gone through the Floo.

Harriet Potter, Spinner's End-July 13, 1991

Harriet stood in the middle of Professor Snape's living room, having just seen her mother disappear through the floo. She didn't quite know what to make of him, because, on one hand, he hadn't seemed very pleasant when she met him at Hogwarts. On the other hand, her mother wouldn't have left her here if she didn't like him.

"Well?" snapped Snape, making Harriet jump. She looked up at him. "Do you have something to keep you busy? Or will you be staring at the floor all day?"

Harriet couldn't tell if he was being sarcastic or not, but, judging by his expression, felt it would be prudent of her to answer.

"I have a book," she informed him, before adding, for good measure, "sir."

"Good," nodded the professor, before walking swiftly from the living room towards a door at the end of the hall, opening it to reveal stairs that lead downward into what looked like a basement. She had to yet to move from her spot, unsure if she should follow.

"Are you waiting for a personalized invitation?" asked Snape, rather bitingly. Harriet all but sprinted to the steps where he was waiting. She looked down at them hesitantly, as they were rather old looking, but nevertheless followed him down into the darkness, closing the door gently behind her.

When the duo finally reached the bottom of the stairs, Harriet found herself standing in one of the most interesting places she had ever seen. There were shelves stacked with different vials and bottles, large cupboards labeled with names such as Boomslang Skin and Bezoars were pushed against the wall. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the basement, though, were the several cauldrons in the room, bubbling and simmering, letting out different colored wisps of steam occasionally.

"You," Professor Snape drew her attention back to him, as he rolled up the sleeves of his black robes, "will sit in that chair," he gestured to a small chair in a corner of the room. "and read quietly, something that I am sure will be very difficult for you," he scowled as Harriet clambered obediently onto the chair. "Make one sound and I'll pickle you into six jars, understood?"

Harriet nodded once, wondering how serious he was about the threat. He turned and began to move about the room, taking things from one cupboard, throwing something else into another. Harriet did her best to focus on her book, but it was incredibly difficult to do so with Snape brewing a potion in front of her. It was taking all of her self control, honed from years of living with the Dursleys, not to ask him what he was making.

She had yet to get in trouble with her parents for asking them something, but she didn't think it would go down well with Snape. He was definitely not the nicest man Harriet had met, having already made several threats and insults towards her since she had been here, but for some reason she didn't find herself afraid of him.

Despite the fact that he didn't seem to like her much, she didn't think he would hurt her in any way (her mother wouldn't have left her here if she thought he would).

His insults were actually a bit funny, Harriet mused, if you stopped to think about it. Not to mention that they were much more clever than the ones the Dursleys had concocted. If Harriet was going to be insulted by somebody, she decided, she rather the person have the decency to come up with an original insult, as opposed to using the same old material every time.

Once again, she found herself watching Snape curiously as he worked. Whatever he did, he did it quickly and efficiently, giving Harriet the impression that he had been doing this for a long time.

"Is there something interesting you, Potter?" Harriet's eyes widened, realizing that the professor had caught her staring.

"I was just-," she stuttered unsure of whether or not he was being serious or not.

"You were what?" he said impatiently.

"I was wondering what you were making," she finished in a rush.

"I am making a potion," he said briskly, adding something to his cauldron and stirring slowly, "or did it completely escape your notice that we were in a potions lab?"

"I've never been in a potions lab before, sir," Harriet pointed out, not unreasonably, she thought. Snape thought otherwise and frowned at her.

"And it is not easy to deduce your location by examining your surroundings?" Harriet looked at him and shrugged. "Don't shrug," he ordered, "if you have something to say, say it!"

"I suppose it isn't, sir," gulped Harriet, eyes wide. "But, in all honesty, the only experience I've had with potions were the ones Madam Pomfrey gave me a few weeks ago." Harriet cocked her head to the side. "They tasted like mud."

"Am I supposed to believe that you actually tasted mud, Potter?" Harriet couldn't help but blush. She supposed, when she put it like that, it did sound like a rather foolish thing to do.

"Not on purpose, sir," she said, quickly. "Dudley-thats my cousin-made me do it. I wouldn't have done it, but he threatened to sit on me and...well, he's about the size of a young killer whale, you see."

Snape looked as though he was resisting the urge to smirk, instead focusing on mixing the rest of the ingredients together. Harriet continued to watch him, not even bothering to hide her fascination. The professor gave an exasperated sigh.

"Get up here, Potter." Harriet jumped, before realizing what he had said, and hurrying up to where he was working. She looked into the cauldron and saw what looked to be a thick, green, sludge.

"That looks disgusting," Harriet wrinkled her nose. Snape gave her a pointed look.

"The aesthetics of a potion are unimportant, so long as it works."

"But that smells worse than Aunt Petunia's cooking!" Harriet defended. Snape allowed himself a snort this time.

"Your Aunt's cooking must have improved from since the last time I saw her, then." Harriet jerked her head, turning her eyes from the bubbling potion to Snape.

"You knew my Aunt Petunia?" Snape scowled. At first, Harriet thought he wasn't going to answer, but finally, he did.

"Yes," he reached for a cup of roots and poured it into the cauldron. "I grew up down the street from her."

"Thats how you know my mom." It wasn't a question.

"Yes. The three of us were friends for a while."

"But Aunt Petunia hate wizards!"



"This was before that," Snape pinched the bridge of his nose, giving Harriet the feeling that he really did not want to be talking about this particular subject. "and I was closer to your mother, anyways."

Harriet, against her better judgement, decided to risk asking another question.

"There was a time when Aunt Petunia didn't hate magic?" Snape didn't give an answer, but Harriet took that as a "Yes." Harriet recognized the warning signs of having taken something too far, but her curiosity overpowered her caution, a trait that often lead to nothing but trouble at the Dursleys'.

"What happened?"

"Enough questions," he snapped. He stirred in silence for a few minutes, Harriet trying to figure out what to say.

"Aunt Petunia never liked me much," she said, finally. "Uncle Vernon didn't, either." Snape said nothing. "They always used to tell me that I was a freak and that I needed "it" stamped out of me." Snape turned to meet her gaze, stopping his work for a moment.

"I never understood what "it" was," mused Harriet, making a sudden realization in the stuffiness of the potions lab. It was an odd place to haven an epiphany, for sure, but ten year olds weren't known to be picky about that sort of thing. "but, now, I'm pretty sure it was magic."

Once again, Snape didn't say anything, but she thought he saw his knuckles, clutching the stirring stick, whiten and his jaw clench. She watched him carefully as he reached and touched a small, round scar on the back of his hand, which Harriet thought looked a bit like a burn.

"I'm glad it didn't work." Harriet's decided. Snape looked down at her with his dark eyes as black as ever, evidently confused.

"You are glad what didn't work, Potter?"

"Stamping out the magic," she said it as if it was obvious, which it was, to her. "The Dursley's always thought that it was bad thing and that I should be ashamed of it, but they were wrong, weren't they?"

She looked up at Professor Snape, anxiously. "I should be proud of it?"

"Yes, Potter," he said, his voice sounding odd, "You should be very proud of it." Then, in an obvious attempt to change the subject, he jerked his head, oily black hair swinging limply. "Hand me the aconite."

Harriet looked at him, unsure of which ingredient on the counter that was.

"The little, yellow, flower," Professor Snape sighed. Harriet took the small bundle of flowers and held them uncertainly. "Now put them in the cauldron," he told her slowly. "or does the fact that we are making a potion still elude you?"

Harriet blushed at her momentary lapse in intelligence and dropped the flowers into the cauldron. As Snape stirred the sludge slowly, the potion changed from a green sludge into a slightly more grey slime. It was still disgusting, but it looked a bit better.

"Wow," grinned Harriet. "Is making potions always this wicked?" Snape gave her an indecipherable look and raised an eyebrow at her.

"I may have misjudged you, Potter." Harriet looked at him curiously. "There may be hope for you, yet."

James Potter, Potter Manor- July 13, 1991

James Potter stepped into his living room after work, expecting the smell of his wife's delicious food and the sound of his daughter's delighted laughter. Instead, he was met with a deafening silence that told him that nobody was home. Confused, he walked into the kitchen.

"Hey, Prongs," called Sirius's voice, as he too stepped into the living room. "Where is everybody?"

"I don't know," he called back, as he reached the kitchen. Looking around, he saw a piece of parchment resting on the table and he recognized Lily's handwriting. He picked up the parchment.

Dear James,

I got an urgent call from St. Mungo's saying that they urgently need my assistance. I'm sorry, but I had no way of contacting you, or else I would have let you know.

I had nobody to watch Harriet, but Severus agreed to watch her until you get back. I know you still don't trust him, but I assure you Harriet will be fine with him for a few hours and that he will take good care of her.

When you do go to pick her up, REMEMBER WHAT WE TALKED ABOUT!

If you, Harriet, Sirius, or Remus get hungry before I get back, get take-out. We don't need to risk having you cook.

All my love,

Lily

James reread the letter, sure that he had somehow misinterpreted his wife's neat script. She left their daughter with Snape? The Death Eater? Sure, he conceded when she said to give the man a chance, but that did not mean he was comfortable leaving his daughter with him!

"Prongs?" asked Padfoot, walking into the house. "Where is everybody?"

"Lily was called into St. Mungo's," James ran a hand over his face. "She couldn't find anybody, so apparently she left Harriet with Snape."

"Snape?" Sirius questioned. "Are you sure?"

James handed him the note.

"I'm going to go pick her up," he sighed. "Wait here for Remus, would ya'? Maybe order some dinner for us?"

Sirius nodded. "Sure, mate. Whatever you need."

James walked back into the living room and grabbed some Floo powder. He grimaced. This was not going to be fun.

Severus Snape, Spinner's End- July 13, 1991

For the second time that day, Snape's brewing was disturbed by the sound of somebody in the Floo.

Probably Potter here to pick up his brat, the professor scowled, wiping off his hands. The brat in question was currently mixing the solution in one of his cauldrons; three stirs to the right, then four to the left, just as he had instructed. For the daughter of James Potter, Snape had noted early on that the girl had quite an aptitude for potions.

No doubt something she inherited from Lily, he mused. He snapped his fingers and she looked up.

"That was no doubt you're father, here to pick you up." The girl looked dejectedly at her uncompleted potion. "I'll finish brewing after you leave."

"Oh," she said, disappointed. "Okay." She obediently followed him up the stairs and into the living room, where, in the fireplace, her father's head was waiting patiently. Hearing them enter the room, his eyes turned to follow them.

"Snape," he said calmly. "May I enter?"

Snape gave a simple nod. He had not expected Potter to be so cordial. Lily had no doubt asked (read ordered) him to be on his best behavior around Snape. Potter disappeared for a moment, only to step through the Floo a few seconds later. He had barely had a minute to catch his balance when the girl launched herself at him.

"Dad!" she cried, running up to him and flinging her arms around him. He chuckled and scooped her up, pressing a kiss to her cheek.

"Hello, Prongslette," he greeted cheerfully. "Miss me?" Harriet nodded.

"Yea," she affirmed. "but I had lots of fun with Professor Snape!"

"Is that so?" he asked, shooting Snape a cautious look. Snape glared at him in return. Honestly! What had Potter expected? For him to use his daughter as a potion tester? Even he had enough morals not to use an innocent child as a guinea pig. A marauder on the other hand, he mused, now that idea had possibilities.

"He was teaching me how to make potions," the girl informed her father cheerfully. "He says I'm really good!"

Snape scowled. He had said no such thing! It seemed Potter was disbelieving, as well.

"He did?" he asked his daughter, doubtful.

"Actually," the brat admitted, "he said that I'm not nearly as dunderheaded as the other imbeciles he has to teach." Potter snorted.

"That sounds more like the Snape I knew." Snape resisted the urge to roll his eyes, a habit he had picked up from the kids he taught. Despite the seven years they had gone to school together, and the amount of times Potter and his friends had taunted him, he doubted very much that Potter knew anything about him.

"But I think," the brat whispered to her father, although not quietly enough for Snape not to hear, "that coming from Professor Snape, that's like an 'I love you.'"

If Snape could say anything good about Potter, it was that, in that moment, he really did try his best not to laugh. His best wasn't good enough, but he at least had the decency to disguise it as a cough.

"Well," he said, once he had calmed himself down. "Thank-you, Snape, for watching my daughter." Snape could detect no hint of a lie in Potter's face. Then again, the man could lie as well as some Death Eaters, if the occasion called for it. Snape once again nodded.

"Can I come back again?" the brat asked her father.

"I suppose," said Potter, carefully, eying him with distrust, "if Snape says it's okay-"

"Please, Uncle Severus?" Not even Snape's years of spying were able to keep him from visibly blanching. Potter, too, was shocked and, for a moment, Snape actually thought he was going to drop his daughter. Snape was faster at regaining his composure than his school-boy rival, was, however.

"We'll see," he said smoothly. If he didn't promise the brat anything, he rationalized, he would not have any reason to babysit her next time.

"Alright," said Potter, awkwardly. "We need to get home, Prongslette. Its almost time for dinner."

The girl nodded sadly as she and her father stepped through the Floo, Potter making sure to maintain a firm hold on her.

"By, Uncle Sev!" She smiled, waving happily at him until and then, a few moments later, they were gone. Snape stood staring at the fireplace for a few seconds longer than he should have, before shaking his head rapidly, trying to clear it of his thoughts, and heading back downstairs to his lab.

Harriet Potter, Potter Manor- July 13, 1991

Harriet sat at the dining room table, happily eating the chinese food ordered by her godfather. Her mother had arrived home just in time so now everybody (that is, her parents, Sirius, and Remus) were all eating their food and chatting idly about their day. Naturally, conversation soon turned to Harriet's day with Snape.

"It was great," Harriet said, brushing a strand of black hair away from her face. "Uncle Severus let me help him brew a potion."

"Uncle Severus?" Sirius demanded, sounded a bit startled. He shot a look to her father, who shrugged, helplessly.

"Yea," confirmed Harriet. "At least, he didn't seem to have any problems with me calling him that earlier."

"Of course he didn't," her mum said, an odd note to her voice. Looking up from her plate, Harriet saw an odd glint in her eyes. It

wasn't unlike the proud look that Aunt Petunia got every time she saw her "Precious popkin."

"Do you think I could go back again?" she asked.

"You mean you want to spend more time with Snivel-" Sirius was cut short by a loud bang underneath the table. "I mean," he gasped, sounding as though somebody had kicked him hard in the shin, "Snape?"

Sirius glared at Harriet's mum, but she smiled at him, looking completely innocent.

"Why wouldn't I?" Harriet asked, genuinely confused. Was there something that she didn't know? "He was nice. Plus," she added, after thinking for a second, "his insults were really funny."

"He insulted you?" her father asked sharply, eying her from across the table. Harriet was surprised at his sudden attention.

"Sometimes," she said carefully, before adding trying to reassure him, "but he didn't mean it! I know he didn't!"

"How do you know, love?" asked mum softly. Harriet ran a hand through her hair, a nervous habit she had picked up a few years ago.

"He didn't say it them same way the Dursleys did."

An awkward silence filled the table. There was nothing but the sound of silverware scraping across the plates, followed by the sound of chewing, and maybe somebody taking a sip of water. Harriet glanced around the table, feeling a bit guilty. For some reason, her parents didn't really like her talking about the Dursleys. She wasn't too sure why, but they always got angry whenever she brought them up. She decided to move the subject into safer waters.

"So can I go see Uncle Severus again?" She bit her lip, hesitantly. "Dad said I could, if its okay with Uncle Severus."

"Your dad is right," nodded her mother approvingly, her eyes lightening up considerably. She even smiled a bit. "If Severus says its okay, I don't see any problem with it at all."

"Did you ask him?" asked Sirius, curiously, as he added some soy sauce to his noodles far too casually.

"Yes," said Harriet glumly. "He didn't really say "yes.""

"But he didn't say "no," either," pointed out her father, seeing her slightly depressed expression. She perked up a bit, ignoring the tenseness of her father's posture.

"Thats right!" Harriet went back to chewing her food, seemingly in great though, for a moment. Her eyes had the same look that her mother's eyes got, when she was thinking carefully about something (not that Harriet realized this).

"Could we invite him to dinner?" Harriet wondered aloud, a few minutes later. Remus, in an attempt to calm his friends (and himself) down, had just been telling a rather interesting story about his and his boss's work on their newest acquisition, a small book that spit water at you anytime you tried to open it, ("You should have seen the poor man who brought it in," he joked, he was soaking wet). He stopped mid-sentence.

Harriet realized that she had interrupted. She paled. "Sorry," she said quickly. "I didn't mean to interrupt."

"Its alright, Prongslette. Apology accepted." Harriet let out a sigh of relief. Remus used her nickname less so than the others at the table (except for her mother, who never used it, preferring to call her "love"), so Harriet knew he wasn't mad at her.

"Did you mean Severus, love?" her mum asked her, refocusing her attention. Harriet looked at her for a moment, trying to regain her train of thought.

"Oh, yea," she blushed, finally remembering. "I thought that it would be a nice thing to do. You know, as a way to thank Uncle Severus for watching me. Especially since he was really busy today"

"Thats not a bad idea," Remus said, sounding surprised. He stabbed a piece of chicken with his fork. "Did you come up with it all on your own?"

Harriet shrugged.



"At the Dursleys'," she said," Uncle Vernon always used to have people over for business, usually when he was trying to land a big deal at Grunnings."

"Sounds boring," Sirius made a face, making Harriet laugh. She nodded enthusiastically, in complete agreement with her godfather.

"Thankfully," she said, "the Dursleys didn't like me to be there. They'd lock me in my cupboard, because they were worried about what their friends would think if they saw me." Harriet took a moment to take a sip of her juice, not noticing the dark looks her parents exchanged.

"I was almost always blamed when Uncle Vernon didn't make the deal, but, personally," said Harriet conversationally, "I think it was because his potential clients just want to have to listen to Uncle Vernon's jokes anymore." Harriet made a face.

"Be glad that you never heard him tell the joke about the Japanese golfer."

Severus Snape, Spinner's End- July 15, 1991

A few days after the brat's visit, during which he was plagued by an onslaught of memories from his childhood, Snape received a letter during breakfast, delivered by a large, tawny colored owl, which he had never seen before. Carefully taking the parchment from the owl's foot, he unfurled it, almost choking on his tea when he saw who it was from.

Sev,

I don't know what you did, but you made quite an impression on Harriet. She seems to talk of nothing else but brewing a potion with her "Uncle Severus."

She has asked me to invite you to dinner with us, in a few days time. Don't worry! James, Sirius, and Remus all promise to be on their best behavior.

You have my word.

Send an answer soon,

Lily

Snape snarled. The last thing he wanted to do was spend an evening with that family. But, completely unbidden, he had a vision of the brat's green eyes filled with tears...Lily's green eyes. He slammed his chair into place and slapped the letter on the table. The potions fumes were getting to his head. A few hours with a good book were all he needed.

Potter's book. He mentally face palmed. In all her excitement, the forgetful idiot had left her book here. No doubt, she would remember eventually and want to get it back. He'd have to see her soon or later.

Might as well get it over with, he decided reluctantly.

Sitting back down, he summoned a quill and some parchment. He began penning his reply to Lily.

Dear Lily,

I would be happy (as he wrote this, he had to force his food back down. No doubt vomit on parchment was a large indicator of the insincerity of one's letter) to join you and your family for dinner...

AN: As always, thanks for reading and I hope you enjoy the chapter!

Please review!

Harriet Potter, Potter Manor- July 25, 1991

Harriet woke up to the warmth of the sun shining on her face. Blearily opening her eyes, she realized that, in her exhaustion from the previous night, she had forgotten to close the curtains in her room. She didn't get up at first, as the light streaming in from the window showed it to be relatively early, deciding instead to mull over the events of the previous night.

Uncle Severus (as she had christened him) had finally joined them for dinner. Harriet's mother had prepared some of the most delicious corned-beef Harriet had ever eaten, apparently from an old family recipe. Harriet had offered to help, but her mother had politely declined, instead sending her off to set the table, a task she had completed in a few minutes. She had spent the rest of the evening passing the time until his arrival with Sirius and her father teaching her how to play gobstones.

Harriet hadn't been sure of how the dinner was going to go, but even her most wild predictions could have guessed how it turned out. Her father and Sirius spent half the night glaring at Snape, who did his best to glare back. They tossed around insults so casually that Harriet lost count of the number of times Lily kicked Severus under the table. She didn't even want to think about how black and blue her father's and Sirius's shins had to be (courtesy, instead, of Remus).

Finally, after the last course had been served, Harriet's mother decided to take action. Giving Remus a pointed look, she had gotten up from the table and held her hand out to her slightly confused daughter.

"Come with me to the kitchen, Harriet," she had said, "I need some help with the dessert." Harriet, realizing that her mother had more in mind than just frosting the cake, dutifully followed her into the kitchen. As the mother-daughter duo placed the finishing touches on the vanilla-strawberry chocolate cake, Harriet heard, coming from the dining room, yelling. Obviously unsettled, her mother had told her not to worry about it. There were a few crashes, then silence.

When Harriet and her mother had entered the dining room again, Snape, Sirius, and her father were all sitting at their original locations at the table, although their hair looked slightly messy (well,

her father's looked as it normally did) and the collar of Sirius's shirt was upturned. Remus was as calm as ever, cheerfully complimenting both Harriet and her mother on the delicious looking cake.

She never did learn what had been said between the group that night, but, although the tension was still thick in the air, Sirius, her father, and Uncle Severus were all on their best behavior, not one more insult leaving their lips.

"Harriet?" A quiet voice in broke into her thoughts, and Harriet looked towards her door to see her father waiting outside the door, hair still damp from his shower. When he saw that she was awake, he walked into the room and she scooted over to make room for him.

"What are you doing up so early, Prongslette?" he asked her, sitting gently on the edge of the bed.

"Forgot to close the blinds," she mumbled, still a bit drowsy. Her father nodded, obviously pleased. Harriet assumed it was because she had not been attempting to get up early before her parents to try and make breakfast, a habit she had acquired at the Dursley's and was still having trouble breaking.

"Well," he said, stroking her hair, definitely not helping her get out of bed, "your mother and I were talking and we were wondering if you wanted to go to Diagon Alley today."

That definitely woke Harriet up. Her parents had told her about Diagon Alley, and it would be a lie for her to say that she wasn't eager to see it in person. Her father, seeing her excitement, laughed.

"Really?" she moved to sit up more fully in bed.

"Yes," her father chuckled. "Its time for us to go get your Hogwarts things. You'll be going in a little over a month." His smile grew a bit sad here. "You need to get robes, books, supplies, a wand..." he trailed off, making a mental list. Harriet, however, focused on that last item.

A wand.

The one thing she had been looking more forward to than anything else since she had learned she was a witch. She hadn't really known how she was going to get a wand, but her mother had explained that the wand was purchased by the witch or wizard from a wandmaker, in her case, Ollivander, and that each wand was unique to the person.

Harriet couldn't wait.

Her father left her room to allow her to get ready, which she did in a hurry. She descended the stairs two at a time, almost tripping over the last step, and skidded into the kitchen. Regaining her balance, she walked happily over to the kitchen table, where her mother had placed a huge breakfast, pointedly ignoring her father's sniggers.

"When are we leaving?" she asked, almost as soon as she sat down. Her mother tried to force back a smile.

"As soon as you finish breakfast," her mum said firmly. Harriet took a huge bite of toast and swallowed, followed by a large gulp of orange juice.

"Done!" she announced, jumping up from her seat. Her father wrapped his arms firmly around her, though, and pulled her back onto the chair before she could get far.

"Not so fast," he laughed, "I think your mother meant a real breakfast." He shoved the still full plate at her. "Eat!"

She gave him a sour look, making him laugh once again because it held no real malice, before settling down and properly eating her breakfast, which was delicious, as always.

"Are Moony and Padfoot coming?" inquired Harriet, as she worked her way through a large stack of blueberry pancakes.

"No, Prongslette," said her father. Harriet's face fell. "They're really sorry, but Sirius really needed to clean out his house and Remus offered to help him. They know you will have a fantastic time, though!"

"Sirius has a house?" Harriet stopped cutting up her pancake, looking at her father expectantly.

"In London," he informed her. "It was left to him by default, since he was the last remaining member of his family. He hasn't been there in ages, though, so he wanted to go see if it was still inhabitable."

Harriet nodded, accepting the explanation, and finally managed to finish off the last of her pancakes. She let out a satisfied sigh and sat back in her chair.

"Honestly," laughed her mother, "how you manage to eat as much as your father at your size, I'll never know!"

"It's your fault," retorted Harriet, blushing. "Your food is too good!" Her mother laughed, removing both of their plates from the table with a flick of her wand, and her father ruffled her hair.

"Give us a few minutes," her mother instructed, "and go put on your shoes. Then we can get going."

Harriet raced off to do as they instructed, finally meeting her parents at fireplace. They were going to travel by Floo to the Leaky Cauldron, a famous inn and pub on Charring Cross Road in London, and from there, they would go to Diagon Alley. Neither one of Harriet's would tell her how they would get to Diagon Alley from there, but both got very sly smiles on their faces whenever Harriet brought it up.

Her mother and father walked downstairs. The few minutes had felt like a lifetime to Harriet, who was unbelievably excited, especially after all of the stories she had heard about Diagon Alley.

"Alright, Harriet," Lily began, "do you have your Hogwarts list?"

Harriet showed the piece of parchment to her mother, before taking it back and scanning over the list of ingredients for the umpteenth time that morning.

## HOGWARTS SCHOOL of WITCHCRAFT and WIZARDRY

### UNIFORM

First-year students will require:

1. Three sets of plain work robes (black)

2. One plain pointed hat (black) for day wear
3. One pair of protective gloves (dragon hide or similar)
4. One winter cloak (black, silver fastenings)

Please note that all pupils' clothes should carry name tags

## COURSE BOOKS

All students should have a copy of each of the following:

The Standard Book of Spells (Grade 1) by Miranda Goshawk

A History of Magic by Bathilda Bagshot

Magical Theory by Adalbert Waffling

A Beginners' Guide to Transfiguration by Emeric Switch

One Thousand Magical Herbs and Fungi by Phyllida Spore

Magical Drafts and Potions by Arsenius Jigger

Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them by Newt Scamander

The Dark Forces: A Guide to Self-Protection by Quentin Trimble

## OTHER EQUIPMENT

1 wand

1 cauldron (pewter, standard size 2)

1 set of glass or crystal phials

1 telescope set

1 brass scales

Students may also bring an owl OR a cat OR a toad

## PARENTS ARE REMINDED THAT FIRST YEARS ARE NOT ALLOWED THEIR OWN BROOMSTICKS

"Are you sure we can find all this?" Harriet asked uncertainly. It seemed pretty unlikely that Wizards would be able to hide an entire shopping district from Muggles, even in a place as large and busy as London.

"If you know where to look," promised her father. "Now, Prongslette, your mother and I were thinking that, if you're up to it, you could Floo on your own this time."

"By myself?" Harriet gulped, looking at the fireplace, which was suddenly looking much more ominous to her than it had a few seconds ago.

"Only if you're ready, love," her mother assured her. Harriet bit her lip. "I'll be waiting on the other side for you to come through, if that makes you feel any better," offered her mother. Harriet cast the fireplace one more anxious look, before setting her jaw and nodding determinedly.

"Alright, then," smiled her father. Her mother took some of the Floo powder and was off with a shout of "Diagon Alley!" Harriet shifted and her father, noticing, gave her a careful look.

"It's alright if you don't want to do this, Prongslette," he promised, glasses shining in the remaining light of the fireplace. "Nobody would blame you. You've only known about the wizarding world for a few months."

Harriet shook her head. She was now determined to do this. It was only the Floo, after all. She had seen it done enough times to know that it was hardly rocket science. Her father gave her one more searching glance, then offered her the small bowl of Floo powder. Gently, she took a handful of it and threw it into the fireplace. The light blazed bright green.

"Make sure to say the name clearly and loudly," her father reminded her. "Keep your elbows tucked in. You'll be fine."

Harriet stepped into the fire and felt the familiar tickling sensation. She took a deep breathe and began to speak.



"Diago-" There was too much soot in the fireplace; Harriet immediately swallowed ash upon entering the warm fireplace. Hard as she tried, she couldn't stop the cough that tore through her throat.

James watched horrified as his daughter vanished to an unknown location. He hastily grabbed a handful of Floo powder and threw it into the fireplace. The dead terror formed a tight ball in his stomach and, as entered the Floo, he prayed to God that he would find both his wife and his daughter safe and sound on the other side.

Harriet Potter, Knockturn Alley- July 25, 1991

Once again, it felt as though she was being sucked down a giant drain. She seemed to be spinning very fast — the roaring in her ears was deafening — she tried to keep her eyes open but the whirl of green flames made her feel sick —and this time she didn't even have her parents to hold onto. Something hard knocked her elbow and she tucked it in tightly, still spinning and spinning — now it felt as though cold hands were slapping her face — squinting through her glasses she saw a blurred stream of fireplaces and snatched glimpses of the rooms beyond — her breakfast was churning inside her — she closed her eyes again wishing it would stop, and then...

She fell, face forward, onto cold stone and felt the bridge of her glasses snap.

Dizzy and bruised, covered in soot, she got gingerly to her feet, holding his broken glasses up to her eyes. She was quite alone, but where she was, she had no idea. All she could tell was that she was standing in the stone fireplace of what looked like a large, dimly lit wizard's shop — but nothing in here was ever likely to be on a Hogwarts school list.

A glass case nearby held a withered hand on a cushion, a bloodstained pack of cards, and a staring glass eye. Evil-looking masks stared down from the walls, an assortment of human bones lay upon the counter, and rusty, spiked instruments hung from the ceiling. Even worse, the street that Harriet could see through the dusty window was dark and narrow-nothing at all like her parents' descriptions of Diagon Alley.

Every instinct in Harriet screamed at her that the sooner she got out of here the better. She doubted that the store owner would be very understanding of her predicament-that is, if he was even willing to listen to her explain that she had gotten lost on her first time using the Floo Network.

She made her way swiftly and silently to the door, but was forced to quickly duck behind a shelf when the little bell above the door rang, signaling that a customer had entered the store. Looking around quickly, she saw a large, black, cabinet to her left. She darted inside it, not wanting whoever had just entered to see her covered in soot with broken glasses in the dark and gloomy store, her apprehension of which was growing more and more by the minute.

Peeking through the crack in the cabinet door, she saw a pale man and an even paler boy enter the shop. His hair, so blonde that it was almost white, hung almost to his shoulders, framing his pointy face. He was immaculately dressed, something Harriet thought odd considering the location, and he held himself with his nose turned up, as if he had smelt something fowl in the air (Harriet couldn't help but agree with him there). Harriet had a feeling that this man was not somebody to be trifled with.

The boy looked remarkably similar, with his pale hair cut much shorter and his face just as pointy.

Father and son, Harriet decided.

The man walked purposefully to the front of the store and sharply pressed the bell on the counter. He glanced over his shoulder out the window warily, as if at any moment expecting police to come barging into the room to arrest him.

Well, Harriet mentally corrected herself, just as a stoop-shouldered greasy haired man walked up from behind the counter, I suppose it would be a team of Aurors, not the police, who would arrest him.

"Mr. Malfoy," purred the greasy haired man in a voice as oily as his hair, "a pleasure to see you again! And little Master Draco! What a pleasure, having you both in my shop."

"Draco is currently buying the things he needs for Hogwarts," drawled Mr. Malfoy, very obvious that he wished to be done with the

pleasantries and get on with his business. The oily-haired man didn't seem to notice.

"Oh," he said, "that is right! You would be about eleven now, wouldn't you, Master Draco?"

"Yes," snarled Mr. Malfoy, not giving his son a chance to answer, "as I said, he is starting Hogwarts this year, Mr. Borgin"

"Well," offered Mr. Borgin, "we have several things here that might interest you, if you plan on getting him a congratulatory gift! We have for instance, the Hand of Glory, best friend to thieves and plunderers! Insert a candle and it gives light only to the holder-"

"I do hope," interrupted Mr. Malfoy in a tone dangerous enough to make Mr. Borgin's sly smile falter, "that my son amounts to more than just a thief or plunderer."

"Of course," Mr. Borgin said, finally realizing his mistake, "I never meant no disrespect!" He apologized anxiously, tripping over his words. Mr. Malfoy's lip curled into an incredibly annoyed sneer, as did his son's.

"Enough," he barked. Mr. Borgin stopped and Mr. Malfoy took a calming breath, before pasting a patronizing smile onto his face. "Anyways, I am not here to buy. I am here to sell."

"Sell?" repeated Mr. Borgin, obviously disappointed.

"Yes," sneered Mr. Malfoy. "With the return of the Potters and the release of Black from Azkaban Prison, the Ministry has been conducting more raids, lately. As it happens, I have some items with me that would be incredibly...incriminating, if they were to be found in my possession."

Harriet frowned. Several days after having been taken from the Dursleys' home, her parents had sat her down and explained, more fully, what had happened the night Voldemort had come to their house. Specifically, Sirius's role in it, and how he had been framed for betraying them to Voldemort, thus spending nine years in prison for a murder he did not commit.

"I heard about those," nodded Mr. Borgin. "The Ministry needs to stop sticking their nose where it doesn't belong," Mr. Borgin commented, obviously trying to get on the Malfoys' good sides. Draco snorted and, getting bored with the proceedings, began to look around the shop. "Pure wizard blood is counting less and less, these days."

"Not with me," said Malfoy coolly.

"Nor me," agreed Mr. Borgin.

"If we could get onto business," began Mr. Malfoy, placing his box on the counter. Whatever was inside, Harriet never got to see. She suddenly found her view obstructed by Malfoy's son, who, in his exploration of the shop, found himself far too close to the cupboard for Harriet to be comfortable. Holding her breath, she backed as far as she could into her hiding place, hoping with everything she had that he would not find the cupboard very interesting.

Drat, she thought, as he caught sight of it. Luck was not with her that day, she decided, as Draco slowly got closer and closer. He reached out and grabbed the handle of the cupboard-she was done for, he was going to find her- he twisted the door handle-Oh god-

WHAM!

Mr. Malfoy's cane came down hard on the side of the cupboard, near the handle, forcing Draco to jump backwards. Harriet's eyes watered up from the loud noise that was now ringing in her ears.

"What did I say before we got here, Draco?" Mr. Malfoy asked smoothly. "Touch nothing."

"Sorry, father," said Draco in a voice that was clearly not apologetic, reminding Harriet strongly of Dudley. He gave the cupboard a final look, at which Harriet flinched as though he could see her, then both he and his father disappeared from sight. A few seconds later, Harriet heard the small bell ring, signifying that they had left the shop.

Harriet let out a breath she had not realized she had been holding. She heard Mr. Borgin mumbling to himself.

"Yes, Mr. Malfoy," he complained, "Whatever you'd like Mr. Malfoy. Git. Honestly, what I should have said to him-"

Harriet never did hear what Mr. Borgin should have said, because he moved to the back room of the shop, giving Harriet her chance to escape. Harriet waited for a minute in case Mr. Borgin came back, then, quietly as she could, slipped out of the cabinet, past the glass cases, and out of the shop door.

Clutching her broken glasses to her face, Harriet stared around. She had emerged into a dingy alleyway that seemed to be straight out of some sort of horror movie. The one she'd just left, Borgin and Burkes, looked like the largest, but opposite was a nasty window display of shrunken heads and, two doors down, a large cage was alive with gigantic black spiders.

Harriet had a bad feeling and the hairs on the back of her neck pricked up. Looking over her shoulder, she saw two older looking witches looking at her curiously. Feeling reasonably jumpy, she tried to hold her glasses on straight as she set off quickly, hoping to find her parents (or anybody remotely decent looking) soon.

Harriet paused after a minute, realizing that she wasn't getting anywhere. She knew that she had misspoken when using the Floo, so she could honestly be anywhere. She just hoped she wasn't too far from Diagon Alley and tried to stay calm as she figure out what to do.

"Lost, dearie?" a gravely voice spoke into her ear, making her jump. An aged wizard was standing behind her, holding with his gnarled hands a tray of what looked to be human fingers. He was looking hungrily at her.

Harriet shook her head rapidly, trying not to look as scared as she really was, but failing miserably. She slowly backed away, but the wizard followed her, smiling wider.

"I'm fine," she gasped, ignoring how scratchy her voice sounded, "honest."

The wizard made a subtle grab for her wrist, which Harriet narrowly avoided. She was trembling at this point.

"I really need to be going-"

"OI!" A booming yell cut across the alley "What'd yeh think yer doing to 'er? Leave the poor girl alone!" The old wizard cursed and left Harriet feeling even more lost than she had been before. Harriet searched the alley for her savior, finding it in the hulking form of the largest man she had ever seen.

"Get over 'ere!" he called to her, waving her to come with his massive arm. Harriet, looked at the alley, before deciding that the giant was definitely the lesser of two evils, and rushing towards him. He gave her no time to say anything, instead grabbing her by the scruff of the neck and pulling her along the twisting alleyway right into bright sunlight.

Harriet blinked, but before she could see where they were, the giant man had stepped in front of her, arms crossed, looking down at her with eyes glinting like black beetles. Now that they were in the sun, Harriet could better see the man who had saved her. His face was almost completely hidden by a long, shaggy mane of hair and a wild, tangled beard, but Harriet could just make out the laugh lines around his mouth and eyes. He wore an enormous overcoat, and Harriet just managed to notice him tucking a small, grubby package into his pocket.

"What'd yeh think yer were doing? Skulkin' 'round Knockturn Alley, eh?" He growled. Harriet, still slightly panicked from what had happened, could do nothing more than stammer.

"Sorry! Floo powder- coughed- I got lost- first time..."

"Got lost on yer first time Flooin' alone, did yer?" Harriet nodded as the giant's face softened.

"Well, don't yeh worry too much 'bout it. Happens ter everybody at one point er 'nother." He looked down at her, once again, before smiling and beginning to brush the soot and dirt off her. He didn't seem to know his own strength, however, and almost forced her down in the process. She would most definitely have a few bruises from the experience.

"So," he said, continuing to brush off the soot. "What's yer name?"

"Harriet," she gasped, slightly winded, as the giant finally finished. "Harriet Potter."

"Well o' course yeh are!" He smiled even more widely at her, the corners of his eyes wrinkling up. "Don' know why I didn't recognize yeh e'fore! Course, I 'aven't seen yeh since ye were a baby, Harriet, and no bigger than a loaf o' bread, ter boot!" He gave her a curious look. "I don' suppose yeh 'member me?"

Harriet shook her head shyly. He didn't seem to mind though, instead, he just smiled some more at her.

"Rubeus Hagrid," he introduced himself. "Keeper of Keys and Grounds at Hogwarts!"

"Nice to meet you, Mr. Hagrid," she said politely. He waved a giant hand.

"None o' this "mister" stuff," he ordered, "makes me feel old. Just call me Hagrid." He looked over his shoulder and scanned the people behind him. "Now where 're yer parents, Harriet. I 'spect yeh was to meet them somewhere 'round 'ere?"

"Yes," she said, "We were supposed to meet at the Leaky Cauldron, but I got lost using the Floo."

"Bet they're worried sick 'bout yeh," Hagrid nodded. "Good people, yer parents. 'aven't seen them in ages though. Be good to catch up with 'em." He patted her shoulder, almost knocking her over again. "Don't worry. I'll get yeh ter 'em, soon 'nough."

She bit her lip. "I'm not too far away, am I? From Diagon Alley, I mean?"

He laughed. "No," he chuckled, "not too far off." Seeing Harriet's confused expression, he stepped to the side, giving her her first view of what was behind him.

"Welcome, Harriet, ter Diagon Alley!"

Harriet Potter, Diagon Alley-July 25, 1991

Harriet gasped, because she had never seen anything like it before. There were shops selling robes, shops selling telescopes and strange silver instruments Harriet had never seen before, windows stacked with barrels of bat spleens and eels' eyes, tottering piles of spell books, quills, and rolls of parchment, potion bottles, globes of the moon...

Hagrid and Harriet were standing next to a large, snowy white building that towered over the rest. She craned her neck to try and get a view of the rest of the building.

"Gringotts," Hagrid told her leading her away, "the wizards' bank. Yeh'll pro'lly come back 'ere later with yer parents. I just finished some business there, meself. Fer Dumbledore. Hogwarts business." Hagrid drew himself up proudly. "He usually gets me ter do important stuff fer him, like gettin' things from Gringotts — knows he can trust me, see." Hagrid turned and placed a hand on her shoulder, steering her forward. "Anywho, we gotteh get yeh ter the Leaky Cauldron!"

She found herself wishing for eight more eyes as Hagrid led her down the brightly lit alley. A low, soft hooting came from a dark shop with a sign saying Eeylops Owl Emporium — Tawny, Screech, Barn, Brown, and Snowy. Several boys of about Harriet's age had their noses pressed against a window with broomsticks in it. "Look," Harriet heard one of them say, "the new Nimbus Two Thousand — fastest ever —"

She turned her head in every direction as they walked up the street, trying to look at everything at once: the shops, the things outside them, the people doing their shopping. A plump woman outside an Apothecary was shaking her head as they passed, saying, "Dragon liver, sixteen Sickles an ounce, they're mad..."

She wasn't quite sure where Hagrid was taking her, but when he lead her to a plain brick wall, Harriet was as surprised as if he'd taken her to a floating building. She waited patiently for him to rummage around his coat, looking for something. Finally, he pulled out a pink umbrella.

"Three up... two across..." he muttered. "Right, stand back, Harriet."



He tapped the wall three times with the point of his umbrella. Harriet's jaw dropped as the the brick he had touched quivered — it wriggled — in the middle, a small hole appeared — it grew wider and wider — a second later they were facing an archway large enough even for Hagrid, leading into what looked like a tiny and grubby looking pub.

"Be grateful if yeh don't mention that ter anyone at Hogwarts," he said, looking at her out of the corner of his eyes as he put away his umbrella. "I'm — er — not supposed ter do magic, strictly speakin', 'cept fer special circumstances, like this one, with me 'elping you find yer parents, an' all."

Harriet nodded, and Hagrid lead her through the archway and into the pub.

After the amazing things that she and Hagrid had passed by, her expectations for the Leaky Cauldron had been great, so it was difficult to mask her disappointment. For the "famous place" Hagrid had described it as on their short journey, it was it was very dark and shabby. A few old women were sitting in a corner, drinking tiny glasses of sherry. One of them was smoking a long pipe. A little man in a top hat was talking to the old bartender, who was quite bald and looked like a toothless walnut. The low buzz of chatter stopped when they walked in. Everyone seemed to know Hagrid; they waved and smiled at him, and the bartender reached for a glass.

"The usual, Hagrid?"

"Can't, Tom," Hagrid refused, placing a massive hand on Harriet's shoulder, "Need ter help Harriet 'ere find 'er parents."

The Leaky Cauldron had suddenly gone completely still and silent.

"Bless my soul," whispered the old bartender, "Harriet Potter... what an honor."

He hurried out from behind the bar, rushed toward Harriet and seized her hand, tears in his eyes.

"Welcome back, Ms. Potter, welcome back."

Harriet didn't know what to say. Everyone was looking at her. The old woman with the pipe was puffing on it without realizing it had gone out. Hagrid was beaming.

Then there was a great scraping of chairs and the next moment, Harriet found herself shaking hands with everyone in the Leaky Cauldron.

"Doris Crockford, Ms. Potter, can't believe I'm meeting you at last."

"So proud, Ms. Potter, I'm just so proud."

"Always wanted to shake your hand — I'm all of a flutter."

"Delighted, Ms. Potter, just can't tell you, Diggle's the name, Dedalus Diggle."

"I've seen you before!" said Harriet, as Dedalus Diggle's top hat fell off in his excitement. "You bowed to me once in a shop."

"She remembers!" cried Dedalus Diggle, looking around at everyone. "Did you hear that? She remembers me!" Harriet shook hands again and again — Doris Crockford kept coming back for more.

A pale young man made his way forward, very nervously. One of his eyes was twitching.

"Professor Quirrell!" said Hagrid. "Harriet, Professor Quirrell will be one of your teachers at Hogwarts."

"P-P-Potter," stammered Professor Quirrell, grasping Harriet's hand, "c-can't t-tell you how p-pleased I am to meet you."

"What sort of magic do you teach, Professor Quirrell?"

"D-Defense Against the D-D-Dark Arts," muttered Professor Quirrell, as though he'd rather not think about it.

"N-not that you n-need it, eh, P-P-Potter?" He laughed nervously. "You'll be g-getting all your equipment, I suppose? I've g-got to p-pick up a new b-book on vampires, m-myself." He looked terrified at the very thought.

But the others wouldn't let Professor Quirrell keep Harriet to himself. It took almost ten minutes to get away from them all. At last, Hagrid managed to make himself heard over the babble.

"A'wright!" He boomed over the crowd! "That's 'nough! Gotta find Harriet's parents, now! So be off, the lot o' yeh!"

After giving one last smile to Dedalus Diggle, Harriet was lead through the main room into a smaller, much more quiet and empty, one. The room was no less dingy, but instead of tables and chairs, it was empty, save for several fireplaces against the wall. Standing calmy in a corner was a tall, dark skinned, bald wizard. It took Harriet a moment to realize who he was talking to.

"Mum," she gasped, as soon as she realized, "Dad!" She broke free from Hagrid and rushed towards them, just as they turned their heads to look at her.

"Harriet," sighed her mother in relief, wrapping her arms firmly around her in a tight hug. "We were so worried!"

"Are you alright, Prongslette?" she felt her father place a gentle hand on her back, rubbing it in a soothing motion. Harriet nodded against her mother's robes. "We were scared sick."

"I'm sorry," Harriet grimaced, looking up at both her parents, although their faces were incredibly blurry do to the fact that her glasses were still in her hand. Her father, realizing that she wasn't wearing her glasses, brought it up. Harriet sheepishly held them out. Her mother took them from her.

"Occulis repairo," she said firmly and, before Harriet's nearly blind eyes, the glasses were as good as new. Her mum carefully placed them back on Harriet's face, and she blinked as everything came into a much sharper focus.

"Thanks," she smiled.

"Harriet," said her father, suddenly realizing something, "this is Kingsley Shacklebolt." The bald wizard in question held out his hand to Harriet, who shook it firmly in return. "He's an Auror who works with me at the Ministry."

"Yes," his voice was deep and slow, giving Harriet the odd impression of somebody she could immediately trust. She couldn't quite place his accent, though. "Auror's don't usually handle missing children's cases, unless they belong to somebody who works at the department." He smiled at her, revealing a row of impossibly white teeth.

"The fact that you are Harriet Potter doesn't exactly hurt much," he winked at her, showing that he was joking, before turning to her parents, giving Harriet a glimpse of the earring in his right ear.

"I am glad that everything worked out well," he told them. "I must return to the Ministry and file a report." Lily smiled at him.

"Thank you for coming," she said sincerely, green eyes shining, placing a hand over his, "You have no idea how much we appreciate it."

Kingsley and her father shook hands as he, too, gave his thanks. Kingsley turned once more to Harriet.

"It's been a pleasure, Harriet. I hope you have a fantastic time at Hogwarts!" He ruffled her hair, something people tended to do a lot, Harriet noticed; he waved a cheery goodbye to Hagrid, who had been watching from the doorway, where he was also preventing anybody from entering the room, before hopping into the Floo and heading back to work.

"Are you sure you are alright, love?" her mother asked her anxiously, looking down at her. Harriet nodded, wanting to ease her mum's worries.

"I'm fine, mum! Honest!" she added, when it seemed her mother didn't believe her. "Hagrid helped me!" Both her parents looked up at the giant in question, having not seen him before and just realizing his presence.

"Hagrid!" exclaimed her father, surprised. "It's been far too long!" Hagrid walked up to them and wrapped them both in a tight hug, not even giving them a chance to protest as they were scooped up by the giant of a man. Harriet watched bemusedly from the side as both her mother and father were almost crushed by him.

"Lily! James!" he sniffed, letting them go rather unceremoniously. They straightened themselves up while Hagrid dug around his coat, eventually pulling out large handkerchief. "It's been too long! I was worried 'bout yer! Thought ye'd never wake up!" He blew his nose and sniffed, looking highly miserable all of a sudden.

"Yes, well," said Harriet's mum, trying to calm down the sobbing gamekeeper, "we are both absolutely fine." She patted his back until he finally settled down and gave the three of them a small grin.

"Thank you," said her father, before Hagrid could begin crying again, "for looking after Harriet, for us."

Hagrid shrugged his large shoulders.

"It was my pleasure," he said firmly. " 'Sides, couldn't let a little girl go wanderin' 'round Knockturn Alley, now, could I?"

"No," her mum said softly shooting her another worried glance at the name of where Harriet had been. "I don't suppose you could."

"We need to get going," her father sighed, checking his watch, looking a bit disappointed that he wouldn't be able to catch up with another old friend. "We have to get Harriet's Hogwarts supplies."

"That's right!" Hagrid exclaimed, snapping his fingers, "Yer startin' Hogwarts this year! An' yer birthday's comin' up soon, too?"

"Next week," Harriet offered. Hagrid nodded, looking deep in thought. He looked down at her through his great tangle of hair.

"I'll 'ave to get yer a present," Harriet went to protest, but he wouldn't let her. "Goin' ter be too busy gettin' Hogwarts set up next week, so I guess I'll 'ave to give it ter yeh a few days early." He chuckled. "Don't think yeh'd mind that too much, though."

"You really don't have to-" she argued, but, again, he shot her down, telling her that he'd meet up with them later, once he'd found her something. He left Harriet and her parents, whistling merrily as he walked. She turned back to her parents, who were conversing quietly about where they needed to go first.

In the end, Gringotts was decided to be their first destination. They took the same path that Harriet took to get there from Knockturn Alley with Hagrid, but the sights were no less amazing to Harriet, who was constantly whipping her head around and turning to walk backwards just so she could try and see as much as she could. Her parents explained some of the more odd sights and, by the time they reached Gringotts, Harriet's head felt as though it was about to burst with the newfound information.

Once, again, Harriet found herself near the imposing white building, but, this time, she noticed something she had not previously seen. Standing by the door, wearing a scarlet and gold uniform, was a little creature (Harriet didn't really know what else to call it, as it didn't look human enough to be called human, but nor did it look animal enough to be called an animal). Its skin was wrinkled and it was about a head shorter than Harriet, but its pointed face looked both shrewd and clever, while its overly long fingers looked surprisingly nimble.

"Yes, love," said her mother softly to her unspoken question. Harriet looked up at her, their identical green eyes meeting. "That's a goblin."

"Tricky little creatures," noted James, "and very sharp, too." He gave her a warning look. "You never want to mess with a goblin, Harriet. It's not a very good idea."

Harriet nodded, taking the information to heart, as they walked up the stone steps to the door. The goblin bowed as they entered, the end of its little beard almost touching the tips of his large shoes. Harriet watched as he straightened back up, coloring a bit when he caught her staring. His mouth merely twisted upward in an odd smirk as he went to bow to the next wizard entering the bank.

Harriet and her parents found themselves staring at another set of doors, these silver, with words engraved carefully on them:

Enter, stranger, but take heed

Of what awaits the sin of greed,

For those who take, but do not earn,

Must pay most dearly in their turn.

So if you seek beneath our floors

A treasure that was never yours,

Thief, you have been warned, beware

Of finding more than treasure there.

"Well," muttered Harriet, face pulling into a slightly thoughtful frown, "that's cheerful." Her father, hearing her, snorted.

"Well, goblins are very protective of their treasure," he said, still amused, "you'd be mad to try and rob Gringotts. It's probably the safest place in the world, aside from Hogwarts."

Harriet raised an eyebrow. "But technically," she pointed out, "the treasure isn't theirs!"

"Semantics to goblins, Harriet." James frowned. "They see things a lot differently than we do. To them, they've been entrusted the treasure to guard, so it's theirs. At least, until the proper owner takes it back."

"Why do they think like that?" asked Harriet curiously, but her father didn't have an answer for her right away. The three stared at the door for a moment, only to be interrupted by another wizard, who was obviously impatient to go through.

"Sorry," Harriet offered, as they stepped to the side for him. He gave no answer, simply an annoyed huff, and stomped into the bank, the doors opened by two more goblins on the inside (how they knew when somebody wanted to enter was lost on Harriet, but she assumed it was some type of magic). Harriet got a brief glimpse of the opulent interior of the bank right before the door slammed in their faces. Again, they stood in silence, Harriet waiting patiently for her parents to digest her question.

"I'm not sure." Her father finally shrugged. "Some people think they're just too stupid to recognize what does and doesn't belong to them." He said this in a tone that clearly showed Harriet that he was not one of those people.

"They seem to smart for that," Harriet protested quietly, still staring up at the words on the door. They had been engrossed in their discussion, so had not yet entered the bank. Her mum smiled down at her.

"They are incredibly intelligent, love." She gave a wistful smile, a far off look in her eye. "They know things that we can only dream of."

Harriet cocked her head at her mothers look. Her mother, she had learned, had been a bit of a bookworm at Hogwarts, learning anything she could about everything that she could, and it seemed that this attitude still remained with her, even in adulthood.

"A lot of wizards," her father began slowly, "think that they're superior to muggles, magical creatures-even other wizards."

"Pure wizard blood is counting for less and less these days." quoted Harriet, thinking back to her excursion in the shop and the words of Mr. Borgin, the hunch-backed shopkeeper with oily hair and a slimy smile. "Is that what you mean?" Her mother gave her a sharp look.

"Where did you hear that?"

Harriet looked down at her feet and mumbled, "Knockturn Alley. The shop I was in...there was a man there with his son. He was talking to the owner..."

Her mum sighed, "When we get home, you are going to give us more details about what happened to you when you got lost." Harriet nodded, although grudgingly. "As to your question, it is, partially. Some wizards think that pureblooded wizards, those with only magical blood, are better than half-bloods or muggleborns. Other wizards think that all magical creatures are inferior to wizards, regardless of his or her descent."

"Is that what Moony meant when he was explaining about the werewolves?"

"Exactly," approved her father of her conclusion. "But its not just werewolves. Other magical creatures like goblins, centaurs, giants, and house-elves are all thought of as less important. The truth, though, is that oftentimes they are just as powerful, if not more powerful, than we are."



"Its just a different type of magic," her mum said.

"Maybe its fear, then?" asked Harriet, looking up at her parents. "Whats making them think like that, I mean. Maybe they're afraid of things that are different. The Dursleys were."

"People usually are afraid of things they don't fully understand," her mum admitted. "The problem is that they are usually too afraid to try and understand it, so they shun it." Her mum grimaced. "Its a rather vicious cycle."

"Isn't it also racism, in a way?" scowled Harriet. Her mother sighed and nodded, so Harriet turned back to the sign. It was funny, she thought, the wizarding world wasn't nearly as magical a place as she had first expected. As amazing as it was, there seemed to be a few things that the muggle world had figured out first.

"Its rubbish, of course," her father rubbed a hand tiredly over his face. "Thankfully, its an older attitude that's dying out, and rather quickly, too. A lot more wizards are accepting that sometimes we don't always know whats best."

"So some wizards think that they're better than other people just because they were born either completely human or from other wizards?" Harriet asked, wide eyed, trying to fully understand everything she was learning. Her mother nodded and her father placed his hand on her shoulder. Harriet bit her lip.

"I think that this is one of those times when wizards are the ones who have got things the wrong way around."

Harriet looked at both her parents, then back at the door that had started the conversation. If the door realized the impact it had made on the eleven year old witch, it didn't make any sign of it. When the Potters finally pushed it open, several minutes after they had first stepped foot in the bank, the door opened for them just like it would have for anybody else.

AN: So as you've probably figured out by now, this story isn't going to follow the original plotline exactly. Book One will be pretty similar, but from then on, I plan on changing things up a bit.

As always, I hope you and enjoy!

P.S. Reviews make me smile :-)

Harriet Potter, Gringotts Bank- July 25, 1991

"Good morning. We are here to take some money out of the Potter vault." The goblin at the desk looked up and sneered at the three wizards in front of him as politely as he could, a feat Harriet found rather impressive.

However, Harriet was only half-watching as her father introduced himself to the goblin at the front desk. Most of her attention was focused on the inside of the bank itself. She and her family were standing in a great marble hall, in which were hundreds of goblins, each diligently performing their assigned task. Some of them were weighing coins on little brass scales. Others were examining gems using special eyeglasses. Some were doing basic paperwork and a few of them were hustling about, showing people around.

"Do you have your key?" the goblin asked, while Harriet finally managed to redirect her attention from where the goblin to the right of them to measure glowing-red rubies the size of golfballs.

"Right here," her mother said promptly, easily pulling the key out of the inside of her robe. The goblin gave another sneer, this time one that clearly stated he was a bit impressed. Most likely at her organization, judging by the state of his desk and books.

"And which Potter vault shall you be visiting, today?" he asked, taking the key from her mum and carefully examining it.

"Vault 687," her father answered. The goblin nodded and said nothing for a few seconds, continuing to examine the key with beady eyes.

"Everything seems to be in order," he said, finally, sounding just a bit disappointed. Harriet had to resist the urge to snicker. "I will find somebody to take you to the vault. Griphook!" He called the name at the end of his statement, but there was no response. Grumbling, a scowl set firmly on his face, the goblin clambered down from his seat and made his way through a small door, continuing to call Griphook's name.

"Which vault?" Harriet echoed, startled, remembering the goblin's words. "You have more than one?"

"We have more than one," her father corrected idly, watching the goblin finally make his way back to them with another, supposedly Griphook. "They're your vaults, too, now."

"Come along then," snapped Griphook, before Harriet had a chance to respond to her father. He lead them down the hall toward a door, which he held open for them. Harriet had been expecting more marble, but instead they were lead down a narrow stone passageway, lit with flaming torches. It sloped steeply downward and Harriet almost tripped several times, only just catching herself, to Griphook's barely hid amusement. Eventually, they reached a small section of railroad track and Griphook whistled: shrill and high. A small cart hurtled down the tracks and stopped in front them. Giving her parents a weary glance, Harriet stepped in once they nodded to show her it was okay.

Then, they were off.

At first they just hurtled through a maze of twisting passages. Harriet tried to remember, left, right, right, left, middle fork, right, left, but it was impossible.

The rattling cart seemed to know its own way, because Griphook wasn't steering.

Harriet's eyes stung as the cold air rushed past them, but she kept them wide open, determined not to miss anything. At one point, she could have sworn she saw a bright burst of flame and, wanting to see whether or not it was a dragon, had leaned out of the cart. Her father pulled her swiftly back. She gave him a sheepish grin.

Eventually, they found themselves steering through cavernous passageways, filled with stalagmites and stalactites.

"Whats the difference between stalactites and stalagmites?" she managed to ask her mother through the rushing wind. "I can never remember!"

"Stalactites cling to the ceiling," she answered back, almost drowned out by the sound of cart's wheels on the track. "Stalagmites grow from the ground!"

"Personally," her father decided to add his two-cents, talking as though he was sitting in on a dinner party and not rushing around a cave in a rickety cart, "I don't see why somebody thought it necessary to distinguish between the two. Why not say whether it grows from the ceiling or the ground, instead of giving it a different name? They look exactly the same!"

Neither Harriet nor her mum could come up with an adequate reply.

The cart finally stopped at a small door in the passage wall. When Harriet got off, she was so dizzy that she felt as though her legs were made of jelly. Griphook, however, seemed completely unaffected. He meandered to the door, unlocked it, and opened it. A lot of green smoke came billowing out, so, at first, Harriet worried that something had gone wrong. Neither her parents or Griphook seemed bothered, though, leading her to assume that the smoke was normal. When it cleared, Harriet, whose parents had already explained wizard currency to her, was left staring at mounds of gold Galleons, columns of Sickles and heaps of little bronze Knuts.

Her mouth was dry. For years, the Dursleys had complained about how much it cost to raise her, so surely they didn't know about this. She doubted their hatred of all things magical would extend to gold and silver.

"That was my first reaction, too," her mother said softly, while her father got to work filling the small bag he happened to have with him. Harriet smiled, appreciating, for the first time, that, like her, her mother didn't always know about magic. Nor did she always have access to the Potter vaults. Harriet vaguely wondered if all the Potter vaults contained a small fortune like this one did.

"There we go," her father said, stepping back out of the vault and drawing the drawstring of the little bag tight. "That should be enough for a couple of terms."

They group reentered the cart and, one wild ride later, they found themselves standing outside of Gringotts, blinking in the bright sunlight.

Harriet Potter, Diagon Alley-July 1, 1991

Harriet glanced around at some of the shops, trying to see if she could guess where they were going first, but eventually giving up and looking at her parents, who were watching her patiently.

"Well?" her mum asked her. "Any particular preference?" Harriet shook her head, not really sure of where to start.

"How about lunch," suggested her father. Seeing his daughter's surprised face, he smiled. "Yes, lunch. Between visiting Gringotts and your little side trip to Knockturn Alley, it's already past lunch time."

They chose the corner booth at a small diner, the name of which Harriet couldn't pronounce. After ordering their food, Harriet gave them a brief account of her trip to Knockturn Alley. Then, they quietly discussed what they needed to buy and where they should stop first. Harriet laughed when her father immediately suggested that Quality Quidditch Supplies be their first stop.

By the time they had finished their meal and left their restaurant, they decided that, first and foremost, Harriet would need some robes for Hogwarts, and that Madam Malkin's Robes for All Occasions should be the first stop.

Madam Malkin's Robes for All Occasions was a cozy shop that looked smaller on the outside than it was on the inside, something Harriet figured wasn't uncommon among wizard shops, judging by the store in Knockturn Alley. Madam Malkin, a small witch dressed completely in mauve, greeted them with a warm smile.

"Welcome" she began, as though it was a customary speech, "to-" She gasped, suddenly recognizing the Potter family. Harriet wasn't quite sure how she would react, but she was pleasantly surprised when Madam Malkin rushed to embrace both of her parents, instead of focusing on her.

"Lily," she said happily, backing away from them after a moment. "James! It is such a pleasure to see you both again! I was so happy when I heard!"

"We appreciate it," said her mum, looking more than a bit embarrassed, although it was clear that she was also deeply touched.

"You'll be needing some robes, I assume," Madam Malkin said briskly, quickly assuming a rather businesslike demeanor.

"Actually," Harriet's father interrupted, before she could get too carried away, "We are all taken care of, for now." Remus, given their sizes, had gone and purchased some clothing for them while he was setting up the house.

"We are here because Harriet needs her school robes. She'll be at Hogwarts soon."

"Oh, Harriet Potter!" Madam Malkin's eyes turned to Harriet and flicked upwards to her scar. For a split second, Harriet thought Madam Malkin was going to begin fawning over her like the customers of the Leaky Cauldron, but she seemed to contain herself and smiled. "You look so much like your parents!"

Ushering the three to the back of the store, she quickly took Harriet's measurements and then ordered them to wait there while she went to the back to look at some fabrics. Harriet's mother, curious as to what she had, went with her, leaving just Harriet and her father.

There was, however, another girl her age in the back of the room. Slightly chubby, she had dark brown hair and a tan face with a squashed-in nose. Harriet waited to see if the girl would notice her, hoping to be able to finally make a friend her age, but the girl was too busy yapping away to Madam Malkin's poor assistant, a young witch who was obligated to listen.

"My father is next door buying my books," the girl was informing the seamstress's assistant, "and my mother is out looking at wands." The girl gave the seamstress a sour look. "I do hope," she drawled, "that you are done by the time they get back."

"It will be done soon, Ms. Parkinson," said the seamstress in a tired voice.

"It better look like the one I saw in TweenWitch Monthly. I don't to be caught dead in out of date robes." She continued to explain to the seamstress about how "dreadfully awful and completely humiliating" it must be for wizards or witches who couldn't afford their own custom made robes." Harriet, reminded strongly of a female Dudley (only, she looked more like a pug than a pig), turned away, slightly

disgusted. She felt her father kneel down next to her, so she turned to look at him.

"What do you say, Prongslette?" he asked her with a small smile. "Want to try and make a new friend?" He gestured over to the Parkinson girl and Harriet grimaced a bit.

"I really rather not," she said a bit hesitantly, looking at her father, worried that he would try and get her to talk to her anyways, which he did not. Instead, he observed the talkative girl for a moment, before laughing lightly and nodding in agreement with her.

"Doesn't exactly seem like the most pleasant sort, does she?" Harriet shook her head rapidly. "I wouldn't worry, then. Besides, you'll have plenty of time to make friends once you're at Hogwarts."

"Maybe I'll meet my own Moony and Padfoot!" Harriet said hopefully. Her father gave her a large smile that Harriet recognized as the one he got whenever he thought about his two best friends.

"I'm sure you will," he said, pressing a kiss to her forehead, then straightening back up. Harriet leant against him, so he put his arms around her, holding her close to his front. They stood like that for a few minutes as they patiently awaited the return of Harriet's mother and Madam Malkin.

When they returned, each carried several different fabrics, from which they asked Harriet to choose one or two. She did, feeling slightly dazed since fashion and fabrics were not really her specialty. She was fitted into several different robes, which were pinned and tucked and hemmed, until finally, Madam Malkin had enough to finish the rest of the robes. After Madam Malkin had assured the Potters that the robes would be delivered to their home in time for Hogwarts, they left to get the rest of Harriet's things.

They bought Harriet's school books in a shop called Flourish and Blotts where the shelves were stacked to the ceiling with books as large as paving stones bound in leather; books the size of postage stamps in covers of silk; books full of peculiar symbols and a few books with nothing in them at all. Even Dudley, who never read anything, would have been wild to get her hands on some of these. Her mother almost had to drag Harriet away from Curses and Countercurses (Bewitch Your Friends and Befuddle Your Enemies



with the Latest Revenges: Hair Loss, Jelly-Legs, Tongue-Tying and Much, Much More) by Professor Vindictus Viridian.

"I was trying to find out how to curse Dudley."

"That's not a very good idea love," admonished her mother, while her father openly laughed at Harriet's straightforwardness. "You aren't allowed to use magic in the Muggle world. James! Stop laughing!" Lily snapped, turning her ire on her husband. Harriet's father quickly grew serious, although Harriet could tell he was fighting a laugh.

"That's err.." he coughed. "That's right Harriet. Even if it were remotely okay to curse your cousin, I doubt you would be able to for a long time. You aren't at that level of magic yet, Prongslette."

Harriet's mother helped her pick out a nice, pewter cauldron for potion brewing a collapsible brass telescope. Then they visited the Apothecary, which was fascinating enough to make up for its horrible smell, a mixture of bad eggs and rotted cabbages. Barrels of slimy stuff stood on the floor; jars of herbs, dried roots, and bright powders lined the walls; bundles of feathers, strings of fangs, and snarled claws hung from the ceiling. While her parents asked the man behind the counter for a supply of some basic potion ingredients for Harriet, Harriet herself examined silver unicorn horns at twenty-one Galleons each and minuscule, glittery-black beetle eyes (five Knuts a scoop).

Outside the Apothecary, they looked at Harriet's list again. Her father smiled.

"Just your wand now, Prongslette." Harriet didn't even bother to contain her excitement as they walked over to Ollivanders. The shop was narrow and rather shabby, with a sign over the door that read Ollivanders: Makers of Fine Wands since 382 B.C. In the dusty, display window, there was a single wand floating above a dirty, purple pillow. Harriet wondered why they bothered with a velvet cushion for a floating wand.

A tinkling bell rang somewhere in the depths of the shop as they stepped inside. It was a tiny place, empty except for a few, spindly chairs that her parents sat on to wait, a small table, and a cabinet with several rows of drawers. Harriet felt strangely as though she had entered a very strict library; she swallowed a lot of new

questions that had just occurred to her and looked instead at the thousands of narrow boxes piled neatly right up to the ceiling. For some reason, the back of her neck prickled.

The very dust and silence in here seemed to tingle with some secret magic.

She shot a wary look at her parents, who smiled in an encouragement. She walked a bit closer to the front counter.

'Good afternoon,' said a soft voice. Harriet jumped in surprise. She had not noticed him before, but a pale man stood amongst the rows and rows of wands. The darkness of the store made him difficult to see, but his wide, grey eyes stood out like moons in the night.

"Er, Hello." Harriet said awkwardly, not too sure what to make of the man.

"Ah yes," said the man, moving toward the counter. "Yes, yes. I thought I'd be seeing you soon. Harriet Potter." He looked down at her, his eyes almost seeming to see right through her, but not in the same way Dumbledore's did. "You have your mother's eyes." Harriet wondered how many more times she was going to hear that in her lifetime. He looked over her shoulder to where Harriet's parents were sitting.

"Lily," he inclined his head as a greeting. "James. If I remember correctly, Lily, your wand was ten and a quarter inches long, swishy, made of willow. Nice wand for charm work."

Her mother fingered the wand in her robe pocket and gave a small smile, "Thats right, Mr. Ollivander."

"You, James," Ollivander turned his light eyes to Harriet's father, "favored a mahogany wand. Eleven inches. Pliable. A little more power and excellent for transfiguration." Harriet's father grinned and nodded, prompting Ollivander to look again at Harriet. "I say your father favored it," he said softly, "but truly its the wand that chooses the wizard."

Mr. Ollivander had come so close to Harriet that, had they been the same height, their noses would have been touching. He reached up with a gnarled finger and traced the scar on Harriet's forehead. She

heard her parents stiffen behind her, but Mr. Ollivander didn't do anything. He merely sighed and dropped his hand. Harriet could see herself reflected in his misty eyes, mingling with a great sadness and regret.

"I'm sorry to say I sold the wand that did it," he said softly. "Thirteen-and-a-half inches. Yew. Powerful wand, very powerful, and in the wrong hands... well, if I'd known what that wand was going out into the world to do..."

Harriet gulped, "It wasn't your fault, sir." He peered at her from underneath his tangle of white hair.

"I am glad that you, of all people, Harriet, do not hold me accountable for what I did." He gave her a small smile. Then, to her great relief, he turned around and began rummaging around a door behind the counter. He pulled out a small tape measure.

"Well," he said briskly, in a much different tone. "Let's get started. Which is your wand arm, Ms. Potter?"

"Well, I'm right handed-" Harriet began, unsure if that was what he meant. It was, apparently.

"Hold out your right arm, please. That's it." Ollivander measured Harriet from shoulder to finger, then wrist to elbow, shoulder to floor, knee to armpit and round his head. As he measured, he said, "Every Ollivander wand has a core of a powerful magical substance, Ms. Potter. We use unicorn hairs, phoenix tail feathers, and the heartstrings of dragons. No two Ollivander wands are the same, just as no two unicorns, dragons, or phoenixes are quite the same. And of course, you will never get such good results with another wizard's wand."

Harriet suddenly realized that the tape measure, which was measuring between her nostrils, was doing this on its own. Mr. Ollivander was flitting around the different shelves, taking down some boxes.

"That will do," he said, and the tape measure crumpled into a heap on the floor, barely missing Harriet's toes. "Right then, Ms. Potter. Try this one. Beechwood and dragon heartstring. Nine inches. Nice and flexible.

Harriet took the wand and looked at it, not really sure what to do. Mr. Ollivander raised an eyebrow and gave an impatient sigh.

"Go on!" He gestured, "Just take it and give it a wave!"

Harriet jumped, then collected herself. Taking a deep breath, she gave the wand a light flick. The vase of roses near the window suddenly shattered, spilling water and flower petals everywhere. Mr. Ollivander made a curious noise in the back of his throat as Harriet's mum waved her wand, instantly fixing the vase.

"That hasn't happened in awhile." Mr. Ollivander quickly snatched the wand out of Harriet's hand and placed it delicately into the box. Harriet was handed another wand, a bit smaller and darker than the previous one.

"Maple and phoenix feather. Seven inches. Quite whippy. Try —"

Harriet tried —and an entire row of drawers in the cabinet sprung forth, scattering paper everywhere. Harriet's father, who had been standing directly in the line of fire, had to quickly duck in order to avoid being hit. He stood up after a moment and smoothed out his clothes, shooting his wife and daughter a smile to assure them that he was okay.

"No," gasped Mr. Ollivander, "No, No! Definitely not." Harriet placed the wand back on the counter gingerly, worried that if she did it too roughly, the wand would be set off.

"No, no — here, ebony and unicorn hair, eight and a half inches, springy. Go on, go on, try it out."

Harriet tried. And tried. She had no idea what Mr. Ollivander was waiting for. The pile of tried wands was mounting higher and higher on counter. Harriet's attempts were growing more and more destructive: already, she had cracked the bell above the door, killed the flowers, broken a window, and even set fire to Mr. Ollivander's hair. Mr. Ollivander wasn't angry, though. In fact, he just laughed as Harriet's father put out the flame. Despite the fact that Harriet seemed liable to blow up the store, he was downright giddy. It seemed that the more wands he pulled down from the shelves, the happier he became.

"Tricky customer, eh? Not to worry, we'll find the perfect match here somewhere — I wonder, now — yes, why not — unusual combination — holly and phoenix feather, eleven inches, nice and supple."

He carefully handed it to Harriet, who took it hesitantly. Almost immediately, she knew this would be different. The wand sent warmth shooting from her fingertips and rushing through her entire body. Harriet gave it a small wave and a stream of red and gold sparks shot from the end like a firework, throwing dancing spots of light on to the walls.

Her father and mother clapped, obviously relieved that they wouldn't have to dodge anymore flying cats (Harriet felt awfully bad for what she had done to Mr. Ollivander's tabby, but he had told her not to worry about it and that it would be fine).

Mr. Ollivander cried, "Oh, bravo! Yes, indeed, oh, very good. Well, well, well... how curious... how very curious..."

He put Harriet's wand back into its box and wrapped it in brown paper, still muttering, "Curious... curious..."

"Sorry, sir," said Harriet, feeling her parents come up behind her, "but what's curious?"

Mr. Ollivander fixed Harriet with his pale stare.

"I remember every wand I've ever sold, Ms. Potter. Every single wand. It so happens that the phoenix whose tail feather is in your wand, gave another feather — just one other. It is very curious indeed that you should be destined for this wand when its brother — why, its brother gave you that scar."

Harriet didn't know what to say and she couldn't help but swallow.

"Yes, thirteen-and-a-half inches. Yew. Curious indeed how these things happen. The wand chooses the wizard, remember... I think we must expect great things from you, Ms. Potter... After all, He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named did great things — terrible, yes, but great."

Harriet took a half-step backwards, running into her parents. She managed to find and clutch her mother's hand, looking carefully at Ollivander. She wasn't too sure about whether or not she liked Mr. Ollivander. A tap on the window drew Harriet's attention away from Mr. Ollivander, who didn't seem to realize how creepy he was being.

Hagrid stood outside the window, grinning hugely and waving madly to get their attention. It took Harriet a moment to recall Hagrid's promise to her earlier, but, when she did, she smiled and waved back. They quickly paid for the wand, eager to leave the store, and met the huge man outside.

Hagrid didn't say anything. Instead, he lifted up something in his hand: perched calmly in a cage was a beautiful, snowy white owl.

"Yeh like 'er?" Hagrid asked, anxiously.

Harriet's smile gave him all the answer he needed.

Living Room, Potter Manor- July 25, 1991

When James walked into his living room through the Floo, he was not surprised to see Remus and Sirius lounging on his couch, as they had told him they wanted to hear about Harriet's trip to Diagon Alley as soon as they could. Harriet, who had convinced both her mother and himself to let her try the Floo on her own again, launched herself at both of them as soon as she saw them.

"Moony!" she exclaimed, "Padfoot!"

"Hello, Prongslette!" laughed Sirius. When Harriet backed away, moving to sit in the middle of the couch, James got a better look at both his friends. They both looked exhausted and he could see traces of dust and grime that they must have missed when they were cleaning themselves off. Sirius, as happy as he looked to see his goddaughter, had a haunted and rather bitter look in his eyes. James needed to talk to him.

"Hey, Prongslette," he began, "Padfoot and Moony are really knackered from cleaning all day. Why don't you take your new things upstairs and put them away? While they rest a little bit, you could see if your new owl gets along with Isaura."

Harriet gave her father a slightly suspicious glance, knowing that that couldn't be the real reason she was being asked to vacate the room. She's just as smart as her mother, James thought, trying not smile proudly. Harriet finally nodded and, after giving both Sirius and Remus a quick kiss on the cheek, she took what she needed and headed upstairs.

"I'll go make some tea," Lily offered, knowing that this was one of those times where her husband needed to be alone with his friends.

"You alright, Padfoot?" he asked, as soon as his wife had left the room. Sirius just sighed and placed his head in his hands, leaning forward and shaking his head a bit.

"It was so hard being back there again," he answered, voice coming out a bit muffled. "I was reliving a part of my life that I thought that I had left behind me a long time ago."

"You don't have to live there, Padfoot," Remus pointed out gently. "I know you don't want to share a flat with me for the rest of your life, but you could always buy a new house when you want to move out."

"Yea," sighed Sirius, looking miserably up at his friends, eyes a bit red. "that's probably what I'll do. But that house has quite a few powerful enchantments and wards around it. I wanted to see if it could be of any use some day in the future. "

"Was it?" asked James, curiously, wishing that he could have been there to help his long-time best friends. "I mean, was it still in decent shape?"

Sirius shrugged and ran a hand through his hair. He leant back on the couch. "Not too bad. Very dirty, as I'm sure you can imagine. Kreacher didn't do a very good job keeping it clean."

"He's still there?" snorted James. Sirius gave a small laugh. "What about your mother's portrait?"

"Oh yes," Sirius agreed. "She's still there."

"And as pleasant as ever," Remus remarked sarcastically. "The entire time we were there, she kept screaming about "filthy half-breeds" and "blood-traitors."

"You'd think after having nothing to do but hang on a wall for thirteen years," mused Sirius with a smile, "she would have come up with better insults."

The three of them laughed together. When it faded, they sat in silence for a few minutes, listening to Lily humming in the kitchen. They could hear Harriet rummaging around in her room, trying to put all of her new school supplies away.

"Thanks," Sirius said, after a few moments. He didn't need to tell Remus or James what he was thanking them for. They knew. After so many years of friendship, it was not difficult to guess what the other was thinking.

"Did Harriet-" Sirius began, only to be cut short by the sound of the Floo ringing. James was pretty sure he felt his jaw drop when he saw who had called on them.

"Snape?" he asked incredulously, staring unabashedly at the head sticking out from the green flames of the fireplace. He managed to compose himself "What are you doing here?"

"Lily informed me that Harriet would be making her first trip to Diagon Alley," he sneered, "and I simply wanted to make sure that you had not forgotten to purchase any of the Potions supplies she'll be needing in my class."

James raised an eyebrow. "Do you honestly think Lily would forget anything?" James smirked a bit. "You wanted to make sure Harriet was alright."

Snape scowled deeper. "It is none of my concern whether or not the brat had a good time at Diagon Alley."

James just laughed and fixed the Potions master with a shrewd look. Even after their rather interesting dinner the night before (was it just the night before? It seemed like ages ago) when they had come to a tentative truce, James did not like nor trust the professor. But Snape seemed honestly concerned for his daughter (no matter how hard he tried to hide it) and, truthfully, James found it very difficult to hate a man who cared for his daughter.



"Why don't you come on through," he suggested, after a minute, "I was just about to tell Remus and Sirius what happened. And Lily is making tea," he added as an afterthought, hoping that the knowledge that Lily was there would convince Snape that this was not some elaborate ruse they were trying to set up.

His head left and, for a moment, James thought that Snape wasn't coming. The Floo roared loudly a moment later, though, and Snape stepped through, sneering at the Marauders as if daring them to make a comment.

They didn't.

The four men sat in the living room quietly, but, unlike before, the silence was not comfortable. Nobody really seemed sure of where to look or what to do, so they did nothing but stare at the floor and occasionally fidget a bit. It was Snape, of all people, who broke the silence.

"Well, Potter?" He drawled. James looked up at him. "Are we going to sit here all day? Or are you going to give us an account of your brat's trip? I do have things to do."

"Right," said James, honestly relieved that somebody had broken the awkward silence. "Where should I start?"

"How about with the beginning?" joked Remus, adding, more seriously, "You mentioned you were going to let Harriet Floo on her own for the first time. She must have been a bit nervous. How did that go?"

"She coughed," James made a face.

"She coughed?" Sirius asked, obviously confused. "What does that have to do with anything? Is she coming down with something?"

James shook his head. "As she was telling the Floo where she wanted to go, she coughed." The other men nodded in realization.

"So," demanded Snape, a bit more crossly than he usually did, "Where did she end up?"

"Not too far," said James lightly. Remus raised an eyebrow and Sirius gave him a sharp look. Both Marauders recognized when James was trying to avoid an issue. He darkly scowled at them.

"Knockturn Alley." All heads turned to the kitchen door, from which Lily had just emerged carrying a tray of tea. Placing it on the coffee table, she balanced herself on the arm of couch, next to her husband.

"Knockturn Alley?" Remus repeated. "Are you sure?" Remus realized what a ridiculous question that was and, not giving them a chance to answer, asked, "Is she okay?"

"She's fine. Her glasses were smashed from when she fell from the Floo, but she wasn't hurt." James said, much to the relief of the three other men in the room (Snape would still, of course, deny having felt anything at all).

"What store did she end up in?" asked Sirius.

"Borgin and Burkes," sighed Lily. Sirius, who had been pouring tea into his cup, stared at her incredulously, not even noticing when the teacup began to overflow.

"Why do I get the feeling that I am going to be spending half my time at Hogwarts this year chasing your daughter out of places she shouldn't be?" Snape groused to Lily. Lily just laughed at him and smiled cheekily.

"Did she get out of there quickly?" Remus inquired, worried about Harriet, despite the fact that he had seen her several minutes ago looking perfectly healthy.

"She tried, but somebody entered the shop and she panicked." Lily shook her head. "She hid inside a cabinet that was, thankfully, perfectly harmless."

"Hiding wasn't a bad idea," Sirius noted. "It wouldn't be a good idea for the Girl-Who-Lived to be caught in Knockturn Alley, regardless of whether or not she meant to be there. No doubt somebody from the Daily Prophet would have gotten wind of it and..." He trailed off, not wanting to imagine the hell that would break loose.

"Who was it that came into the shop?" Remus asked.

"She said it was a man and a boy about her age," Lily explained. "According to her, Borgin said their last name was Malfoy. They were selling something, although Harriet couldn't see what. Most likely because of the raids."

"The Malfoys are still around?" asked Sirius surprised, sitting up straighter on the couch. "That family was pretty tight in Voldemort's inner circle, if I remember correctly. I would have thought that they, well, Lucius at the very least, would be in Azkaban by now."

"Lucius Malfoy made several considerable donations to the Ministry," Snape drawled, taking a sip of tea, "thus placing him above suspicion for the time being. "

"Git," snorted Sirius at Malfoy's not-so-subtle bribery. James laughed a bit.

"So Harriet found her way out of Borgin and Burkes after the Malfoys left?" prodded Remus, after a moment. Both Lily and James nodded.

"After she left Borgin and Burkes, she wandered around for a minute, trying to find her way out. Thankfully, Hagrid was there and helped her find us back at the Leaky Cauldron."

"Hagrid!" Remus beamed. "I haven't seen him in ages! How is he?"

"He was well," acknowledged Lily. "He was very happy to see us and Harriet."

"Please tell me everything after that went well," Sirius begged, making his friends laugh. "My nerves are already on end." Snickering, James answered his friend.

"Yes, there was nothing out of the ordinary after that." He paused for a moment and exchanged a look with his wife. "Well, her trip to Ollivander's was odd..." Remus scoffed.

"When is that trip not odd?" Remus rolled his eyes. "Ollivander is one of the most bizarre men I've ever met, which is saying something, since I live with him!" He jabbed a finger in Sirius's direction, making him shoot a glare at his friend. Lily shook her head.

"No, it wasn't exactly that." She frowned. "When you were trying out wands, when you used a wand that wasn't yours, did anything happen?" Everybody shook their heads.

"Harriet ended up destroying half the store," James massaged his head. "Every time she tried out another wand, there was something different: breaking vases, flying drawers, setting Ollivander's hair on fire-"

"She did that?" guffawed Sirius, Remus chuckling appreciatively. Even Snape couldn't resist a small smirk.

"I've heard of things like that happening," Remus assured his friends, once he had calmed down. "Its not common, but its not unheard of. In all honesty, I'm not surprised it happened with Harriet."

Seeing the curious looks of his friends, he hastened to explain.

"Accidental magic occurs because, when wizards are young, their magical Core is constantly in flux," Remus began, in his best lecturing voice. "The level of magic held with their Core is still adjusting and growing and developing. Sometimes, it surges to a point where a child is not able to contain it, manifesting itself in accidental magic, like when a cup overflows with water. Thats why accidental magic is encouraged. Not just because it ensures that a child has magic, but also because bottling up the magic, so to speak, can have detrimental affects on the child-"

"Yes, Moony," Sirius huffed impatiently, "We know all that already. What does it have to do with Harriet?"

"It all goes back to Dursleys," began Remus, scowling at his friend for interrupting him. James made a face.

"Why does it always have to go back to them?"

"If what Harriet has told us is accurate, the Dursleys made an attempt to punish every incident of Harriet's accidental magic," explained Remus, running a hand through his hair. "and we can assume that this started as soon as she entered their house. At some point, probably without even realizing it, she began to restrain her magic in order to avoid punishment. I don't know if you

remember, but Harriet used to do quite a bit of accidental magic as a baby."

Jams snorted. "I remember. There was this one time where she came down with a cold and, for over a week, every time she sneezed, my hair changed color."

"If you've noticed, Harriet doesn't do nearly as much accidental magic now, though."

"Couldn't that just be attributed to her getting older and her Core stabilizing?"

"Normally," agreed Remus, "that is what I would say was happening. But that doesn't really explain what happened at Ollivander's. On the other hand, abused children often put a "stopper" of sorts on their magical Core, preventing any further accidental magic."

Both Lily and James winced at hearing Harriet being described as "abused." Snape, however, nodded in agreement with Remus.

"There have been quite a few abused children in Slytherin over the years. More so than in other houses." said Snape. "What Remus is explaining isn't uncommon, but normally, the child is not able to maintain the control for extended periods of time and, at some point or another, unleashes his or her magic in a way that could leave their family scarred forever. Either that, or the child is left psychologically and physically damaged from the build-up in their Core unleashing itself internally." Snape took a sip of tea. "For Potter to maintain control for so long without any damage to her health..." Snape shook his head, doubting it.

"Madam Pomfrey's scans didn't find anything," protested James, slightly panicked.

"Its not like Harriet didn't do any accidental magic," pointed out Sirius, trying not to laugh at the mental image of Harriet's uncle floating to the ceiling like some ugly balloon.

"From what Harriet's told us about her accidental magic," agreed Remus, "it seems more likely that she released her built up magic in several, larger instances, as opposed to the many, smaller instances that usually occur in magical children, which served her purpose

well: less accidental magic meant less punishment, since the Dursleys didn't seem to care too much about the magnitude of the incident."

"Even then," Snape protested, "it might be enough to keep her Core from imploding, but it would still be "filled to the brink," he spoke caustically, "to use your" he sneered, "wonderful expression."

"That's where the occurrence at Ollivander's comes in," said Remus calmly, not rising to the bait. "Wands act as channels for magic. Harriet's been bottling her magic up for so long that, as soon as it was given a way out, it exploded, regardless of whether or not it was her wand. Similar to when you shake up a bottle of Butterbeer or Firewhiskey and it explodes the moment the top comes off."

"Well," murmured Lily, visibly relaxing, "that makes me feel quite a bit better. Thank-you, Remus."

Remus just inclined his head, taking the final sip of his tea and placing the cup back on the table. Sirius, on the other hand, was warily eyeing his friend, who still a bit tense.

"Prongs," Sirius said, catching James's attention, "that wasn't the only thing that happened, was it?"

"Not exactly," admitted James. "Ollivander gave us some very interesting information regarding Harriet's wand."

"What about it?" asked Remus, looking at his two friends curiously, wondering what information could have affected them so strongly.

"It's the brother of Voldemort's wand," Lily stated bluntly. Sirius, Remus, and Snape didn't really know what to say to that, so they were just quiet for a moment, taking some time to absorb the information.

"I am not going to lie," Sirius finally said. "I did not see that coming."

"I don't think anybody did," Remus shot a look at Sirius. "It is definitely a bit disconcerting, but-"

"A bit?" echoed James, annoyed. "My daughter has Voldemort's brother wand!"

"It doesn't mean anything," protested Remus, before pausing. "At least," he added weakly, "I don't think it does. I'm not very familiar with wand lore. I can take a look though," he muttered, more to himself. "I might be able to find something where I work."

"You seem to be viewing the occurrence as a bad thing," said Snape.

"Oh?" Sirius demanded. "Excuse us for not thinking that Harriet having the brother wand of your old master is cause for celebration!"

"Sirius," Lily hissed, glaring harshly. Snape, however, seemed completely unaffected by the barbed comment.

"Foolish Gryffindor," he sneered, "always thinking of the immediate effect and never looking toward the future. Do you not know of what happens when brother wands are forced to meet one another?"

Judging by their blank stares, Snape assumed they didn't.

"Brother wands do not work properly against one another," Snape sighed, trying to keep his impatience and exasperation out of his voice. "If Potter ever finds herself facing the Dark Lord, she will, at the very least, have that advantage."

"Amazingly enough," James rolled his eyes, "I don't find that thought too reassuring."

Harriet Potter, Potter Manor- July 25, 1991

At dinner that night, Harriet sat quietly at the table, listening to the adults talk. She wasn't really eating her food, but rather pushing it around her plate, deep in thought. Before she had gone out to get her school supplies, her fame wasn't something she really thought of. She knew of it, of course, but it was simply a small spot flickering on the edge of her mind. Ever since the events at Diagon Alley, though, she had been pondering the idea of her fame and what it meant.

She was famous for something that she could not remember, save for a flash of green light and a high-pitched laugh. She didn't know how she had done what she had done, but the wizards she had met today seemed to expect her to be some sort of superhero, like the ones in Dudley's comic books. She didn't feel like one.

Moreover, she didn't want to be one.

If everybody expected her to do something incredible one day, however, how would they react if she did nothing? Granted, she honestly didn't care too much for their opinions, since she really didn't know them, but she couldn't help but fear that her parents felt the same way.

"Harriet."

What if they got bored of her?

"Harriet?"

Would they send her back to the Dursleys? Would she have to-

"Harriet!"

Harriet jumped, just realizing that somebody had been calling her name. She met the expectant, and slightly worried, gaze of her mother. Harriet began idly twirling a strand of her hair around her finger in an attempt to calm herself down.

"Yea, mum?" she asked politely, trying to pretend that she had been listening to the conversation around her. Her mother didn't buy it, however, and raised an elegant, auburn eyebrow.

"Are you alright, love?" She frowned. "You looked worried there, for a minute."

"I'm alright," Harriet assured her mother. "I am," she protested, seeing everybody's doubtful look. It was Uncle Severus who voiced their concerns.

"I find that doubtful," he retorted calmly, taking a slow sip of his water, "since you haven't said a word all night. Normally, though, I find myself hard pressed to get you to stop your incessant chattering."

"It's just," Harriet began, making sure to pointedly ignore Snape's victorious smirk, "today, at Diagon Alley-"



"You aren't worried about what Mr. Ollivander said about your wand, are you Prongslette?" assumed her father. Harriet didn't have to a chance to answer, though, because he began to ramble worriedly. "Its nothing you have to worry about, Harriet. It doesn't mean anything and-"

"Dad!" she interjected loudly. She was so loud in fact, that the entire table stared at her, never having heard her sound that way before. She blushed and lowered her eyes. "That is not what I was thinking about."

"Oh," her father seemed unsure of what to say, so he settled for throwing a roll at Sirius, who was snickering behind his spoon.

"Should I be worried about what Mr. Ollivander said?" Harriet asked her father curiously. He blanched.

"No!" Harriet's mum was quick to take over, while her father tried to recover. "Now, what was it you were thinking about?"

"I was thinking about all of the people at the Leaky Cauldron," she admitted. She waited for her parents to realize what she meant.

"You mean the ones who went mental when they saw you?" Harriet's mum rolled her eyes at her husband's eloquent description. Harriet laughed and nodded whole-heartedly.

"What about them, Prongslette?" asked Sirius, already having heard the story earlier.

"Everyone thinks I'm special," she said at last. "All those people in the Leaky Cauldron, Professor Quirrell, Mr. Ollivander... but I don't know anything about magic at all. How can they expect great things? I'm famous and I can't even remember what I'm famous for. I don't know what happened when Voldemort came to the house and- sorry-I mean, on that night."

"Oh, Harriet," her mother said, sounding relieved. "Is that what you were worried about?" Harriet shrugged.

"Love, don't worry about it. I didn't know anything when I first got to Hogwarts, remember?" Harriet nodded hesitantly.

"You'll learn soon enough, Prongslette," her father told her, smiling a bit. "I know its hard. You've been singled out, so I'm not going to say its going to be easy, but you'll have a good time, regardless. Everybody does, I promise!"

"Your father is right!" her mother beamed. "Look at Severus! He still has a great time at Hogwarts!" Harriet had to stifle her laughter when she saw the pointed look her mother gave Snape and the annoyed look she received in return.

"Yes," he said, "I thoroughly enjoy spending the majority of my time trying to teach unwilling imbeciles the subtle art of potions making, knowing full well that they neither understand nor appreciate it."

His sarcasm was laced on so heavily that Harriet's mum threw her hands up, exasperated and even Sirius couldn't hold back an appreciative chuckle. Then, a surprisingly comfortable (surprising because several of the men at the table held well known grudges against each other) descended on the table.

"So," Harriet said after a moment, "you won't send me back to the Dursleys if you get bored with me?"

The silence that followed this statement was not nearly as comfortable as the previous one.

"Get bored with-" her father muttered weakly, looking at her in obvious disbelief. Harriet mentally berated herself. She honestly needed to learn when to keep her mouth shut. She quickly got up from her chair and grabbed her plate, ready to make a hasty retreat to the kitchen.

"Never mind," she said quickly, walking towards the kitchen, "forget I said anything."

Her mother was not going to let her off that easily, however, and, before Harriet could make a clean getaway, her mum pulled her into her lap by the belt-loops of her jeans. She let out an indignant squeak.

"Harriet," her mother, worried, said. "We aren't going to get bored with you!" Harriet tried to wiggle away, but her mother just held her

tighter. "And we certainly aren't going to send you back to the Dursleys!"

"I know," Harriet said quickly, feeling very embarrassed at this point. "I didn't mean to say anything I just-"

Harriet was cut off by her father, who had gotten up from his chair and gone over to them, took Harriet's hand and gave it a squeeze.

"Harriet, you're mother and I didn't have a child because we were bored and needed entertainment. We had you because we wanted to raise you and watch you grow up." He smiled at her. "We aren't going to get rid of you when you stop being exciting," he raised an eyebrow skeptically, "which I doubt will happen anytime soon."

"Especially if all of your trips were as exciting as today's," Sirius, who had been listening on the conversation, quipped.

Harriet did the mature thing and stuck her tongue out at him.

Harriet Potter, Potter Manor-July 31, 1991

When Harriet woke up, she didn't notice anything particularly different about that morning. Nor did she realize anything was amiss when she put on her clothing. She descended the stairs as she normally did, not noticing the slightly unnerving silence. It wasn't until she reached the living room and found all the lights shut off that she noticed anything was up. Frowning, she flicked on the light.

"SURPRISE!"

Harriet had to bite back a scream and Isaura, curled around her wrist, let out a very angry hiss. Standing in her living room, looking quite proud of themselves, were her parents, Sirius, Remus, and Snape (Harriet suspected that, judging by the scowl on his face, he was not one of the people who had yelled surprise). She was also a bit surprised to see Dumbledore there, looking serene as always.

"What-?" Harriet tried to figure out what was going on. For some reason, the large HAPPY BIRTHDAY, HARRIET banner just wasn't processing.

"It's your birthday, Prongslette," said her father, looking highly amused. Harriet could only stare at him, making his smile falter. "Did you honestly not remember?"

"I've never celebrated- I didn't-" She seemed at a loss for words and settled for taking another moment to examine the room. They had gone all out she noticed. There were quite a few balloons, mounds of confetti, and the banner they had hung up wasn't hanging at all. Instead it was floating above them without any strings to hold it up.

"Well," Sirius said cheerfully, pulling her into the living room and onto the couch. "It's a good thing we remembered for you."

Harriet plopped down onto the couch, still slightly dazed. She managed a small smile to Professor Dumbledore.

"Hello, sir," she said shyly. She hadn't had very many options to talk to the headmaster, so she was a bit shocked to see him in her family's living room. If he felt at all awkward, though, he definitely didn't show it.

"Hello, Harriet," was his simple response. "Happy birthday."

Harriet nodded dumbly, "Thank-you, sir" she finally said. She had finally registered that her parents were throwing her a small surprise party (indeed, it had taken a long time, but it wasn't exactly something she was used to). She felt something being placed in her lap and saw that her father had just handed her a colorfully wrapped gift.

"I'd hurry up and open it if I were you," he said conversationally, "you've got quite a few left."

"I have presents?" Harriet asked, stunned. Her mother frowned for a moment, before smiling again.

"Yes, love," she said. "That one is from your father and I."

Harriet began to hesitantly open the wrapping paper, moving a bit faster at her parents encouraging smiles. She opened it and found herself staring at a fairly large, leather-bound book. Opening it, she saw that it was a photo album. She flipped through the pages and realized that the first third or so of the book had already been filled

with pictures; some of her parents at Hogwarts, some of them after Hogwarts, and quite a few of her as a baby.

"The rest of it is for you to fill up once you get to Hogwarts," offered her father. Harriet got up from her seat and walked over to her parents, giving them both a large hug, which they happily returned. After a moment they released her and she was sent back to the couch, where she proceeded to open her other presents.

From Snape, she got a lovely set of scales for potions making ("Now you do not have any excuses for blowing up the classroom," he had warned her sternly).

From Remus, she had gotten a dragon-hide wand holster that strapped onto her wrist. As Remus helped her get it on, trying to ignore Isaura's annoyed hisses, he explained that it was spelled against wear and tear and to remain invisible once it had been put onto its owner. It also adjusted to size and the wand in it could be released with a simple flick of the wrist.

Harriet was a bit confused by Sirius's gift.

"Three small mirrors?" she asked, holding them up to the light for inspection. James, apparently knew what they were though and let out a laugh. Remus, too, also shook his head a bit and chuckled.

"Your father, Remus, Pettigrew," his smile grew a bit forced here, "and I came up with these mirrors to talk to each other during class or detention. I thought you might enjoy them at Hogwarts.'

Harriet traced the mirror carefully, not really sure how she should be feeling. It was odd, knowing that her father and his friends had used these mirrors when they were her age (maybe a bit older) and that now it was her turn. She shot a smile at Sirius while Lily chastised him gently.

"Honestly, Sirius," she said, doing her best to sound stern, even though it was obvious that she was quite happy with his gift, "you are not supposed to be encouraging her to get into more trouble!"

"What kind of Marauder would I be if I didn't?" was his retort.

"A good one," Lily grumbled. Sirius pretended that he didn't hear. Dumbledore took a gift from his robes.

"Well, Lily, I fear that you will be very disappointed with my gift to Harriet, then." Lily looked suspiciously at the headmaster, while Harriet tried to protest.

"You didn't have to get me anything!" Dumbledore, like Hagrid, waved away her protests and cheerfully handed Harriet her present.

"I did not get you anything," Dumbledore said happily, "I am simply returning something to its rightful owner."

Harriet's father looked as though he had realized something, but didn't say anything to her, so Harriet unwrapped the light parcel. Something fluid and silvery gray went slithering to the floor where it lay in gleaming folds.

"I borrowed it from you, James, quite a few years ago, with all the intention of returning it." Dumbledore smiled as Harriet carefully picked it from the floor. "But something told me you would be giving it to her, anyways."

Her dad simply nodded, grinning hugely at his daughter's perplexity.

"What is it?" she asked her father.

"Its an invisibility cloak," Sirius was the one to answer, looking as excited as her dad. Harriet looked at him for a moment, trying to decide if he was joking or not, before taking the cloak and tossing over her shoulders. Sure enough, she was left looking like a floating head.

"Woah," she said, almost laughing at the amount of joy that was filling her up. Snape raised an eyebrow.

"That cloak explains how you were able to pull off your many juvenile pranks," he muttered, "without getting caught, despite your below average intelligence."

Remus rolled his eyes.

"Keep in mind, Harriet," her mother warned, after a minute of watching her daughter examine the cloak more closely. Harriet looked up at her. "If we find out you are misusing that cloak in any way, it will be taken away from you."

Her father agreed, although he seemed a bit more grudging about it. Harriet, having finished opening up her gifts ("Your father wanted to go overboard," her mother informed her wryly, "but I told him to save it for Christmas"), took everything upstairs and put them away while the adults prepared the cake.

They sang "Happy Birthday" to her (even Snape, although he looked remarkably out of place among the festive decorations) and, between the seven of them, devoured the cake. Eventually, both Dumbledore and Snape left, leaving Harriet with her parents and Remus and Sirius.

For the rest of the day, they told her stories about Hogwarts and growing up, oftentimes making her laugh until tears were running down her face.

That night, she fell asleep on the couch with them, a content smile on her face.

AN: Part 2 of Harriet's trip to Diagon Alley, her birthday, and so on! Enjoy! Up next? Hogwarts! The train ride, meeting Ron and Hermione, and the all-important Sorting ceremony!

Please review!

tinyrose65

Harriet Potter, Kings Cross- September 1, 1991

"You want me to what?" gaped Harriet, staring at her parents incredulously. Today was the day she left for Hogwarts. The mood around the Potter household had been melancholy all morning as they got ready to leave for Kings Cross. Remus and Sirius had met them there, which was how Harriet found herself with four people telling her that she had to-

"Run through the wall between platforms nine and ten," repeated her father. Harriet stared at the very real, very solid looking wall in front of her. Hesitantly, she took her hand and placed it on the bricks.

They didn't move.

She gave them another incredulous look. Sirius rolled his eyes and leant against Harriet's cart, which he had been holding for her.

"It won't work if you do it like that," he informed her. She sighed and looked again at the wall, located directly in between platforms nine and ten, as her father had instructed. Her ticket had informed her that she needed to get to Platform 9 3/4, but she had first assumed that it was just a misprint.

"Can't I just Floo to Uncle Sev's office," she begged. No matter what anybody told her, she honestly did not feel comfortable running headlong into a wall.

"Harriet," her mother said, "if it would make you feel better, one of us could-"

"Honestly!" came an annoyed voice from behind them. Confused, Harriet twisted around and saw a plump, red haired woman leading her way through the throng of people, six red-haired children in tow, five boys and one girl.

"Packed with Muggles, of course," she was grumbling. "Now, what was that platform number, dears?"

"Nine and three-quarters!" answered the little girl, who looked to be a bit younger than Harriet. "Please, mum, can't I go?"



"You're not old enough, Ginny!" chided the woman, as she reached the platform. Her face gentled a bit when she saw them, her stern face becoming softer. "It looks like somebody has beaten us to it! Hello, there!"

"Hello," responded Sirius just as cheerfully. He had missed human interaction while in Azkaban (among other things), so he made sure to take advantage of it when he had the chance. The woman did a double take when she saw him. Understandably, it had been difficult for the wizarding world to accept that the man they had thought guilty of murder for over nine years was actually innocent.

"Sirius Black?" she gaped, and Sirius winced. He had been met with some less-than-favorable reactions in the past and was anticipating another. What he, or Harriet, was not expecting was for her to throw his arms around him and begin sobbing.

"Oh, Sirius!" She gasped, as Sirius shot panicked looks to his friends and goddaughter, "I couldn't believe it when I first heard! I mean, when they first locked you up, I was so shocked! Fabian and Gideon always had such great things to say about you! And you were there for so long-"

Sirius patted her back, looking remarkably uncomfortable at all the attention he was receiving. He seemed to come to a realization, however.

"Molly?" he asked hesitantly. The woman backed away from Sirius and straightened her robes. She gave Sirius a watery smile.

"I'm sorry," she said, sounding a bit embarrassed. "I know we've only met a few times, but Fabian and Gideon used to talk about you all the time, I feel as though I've known you for ages." She turned to Remus. "You must be Remus! Its been far too long!"

He gave her a small smile as she, once again, ran to embrace him. Harriet didn't really know whether she should laugh or hide before she was squeezed next. The woman then turned to Harriet's mum and Dad, both of whom were looking very prepared for the inevitable reaction that was to follow.

"James," she gasped, wrapping them both in firm hugs, "Lily! Oh! I can't tell you how happy I was when I found out you were awake!"

Harriet watched the proceedings wide-eyed, then turned towards the woman's children, all of whom looked just as shocked as she did.

She managed to catch the eye of the youngest boy, who, like the rest of his family, was covered in red hair and freckles. He was tall, thin, and gangling, with large hands and feet, and a long nose. He gave her a pointed look that clearly said, "Adults are nutters." Harriet nodded in agreement, causing him to give her a small smile, which she returned.

"This must be your daughter!" The woman (Molly, Harriet remembered) said suddenly. She could tell that Molly had been about to say her name, and was extremely grateful that she had stopped short of it. Their group was already attracting enough attention, between their odd possessions, apparent propensity to sob, and flaming red hair (or, in Harriet and her father's case, untidy, jet-black manes).

"Oh, you look just like Fabian and Gideon said you did," she sighed, "so much like your parents! But look how much you've grown!"

"Thank-you?" she said, unsure of what other words would be appropriate in this situation.

"Molly, we were just explaining to her—"

"How to get onto the platform?" Molly guessed. Harriet's mum nodded and Molly turned to Harriet. "Don't worry, dear, it's Ron's first time, too."

The young boy Harriet's age gave her a small wave. Harriet waved back.

"We'll show you how to do it," she assured Harriet. "Percy, why don't you go first."

What looked like the oldest boy marched toward platforms nine and ten as her parents moved out of the way.

Harriet watched, careful not to blink in case she missed it — but just as the boy reached the dividing barrier between the two platforms, a large crowd of tourists came swarming in front of him and by the time the last backpack had cleared away, the boy had vanished.

"Fred, you next," the Molly said.

"I'm not Fred, I'm George," said the boy. "Honestly, woman, you call yourself our mother? Can't you tell I'm George?"

"Sorry, George, dear."

"Only joking, I am Fred," said the boy, making Sirius and her father laugh loudly and Remus tried to stifle his laughter. Off the boy went. His twin called after him to hurry up, and he must have done so, because a second later, he had gone. Now the third brother was walking briskly toward the barrier he was almost there — and then, quite suddenly, he wasn't anywhere.

"All you have to do is walk straight at the barrier between platforms nine and ten." Molly explained, just as her parents had. "Don't stop and don't be scared you'll crash into it, that's very important. Best do it at a bit of a run if you're nervous. Go on, go now before Ron."

Her mum and father both nodded in encouragement while Sirius handed her the cart with her things. She walked in front and stared at the wall once again.

She started to walk toward it. People jostled her on their way to platforms nine and ten. Harriet walked more quickly. She was going to smash right into that barrier and then she'd be in trouble — leaning forward on her cart, she broke into a heavy run — the barrier was coming nearer and nearer — she wouldn't be able to stop — the cart was out of control — she was a foot away — she closed her eyes ready for the crash — It didn't come... she kept on running... she opened her eyes. A scarlet steam engine was waiting next to a platform packed with people. A sign overhead said 'Hogwarts' Express, eleven o'clock. Harriet looked behind her and saw her family emerging from a wrought-iron archway where the barrier had been, with the words Platform Nine and Three-Quarters on it.

She had done it.

She felt her parents come up behind her and heard her father ask, "Beautiful, isn't it?"

Harriet could only nod. Smoke from the engine drifted over the heads of the chattering crowd, while cats of every color wound here and there between their legs. Owls hooted to one another in a disgruntled sort of way over the babble and the scraping of heavy trunks.

The first few carriages were already packed with students, some hanging out of the window to talk to their families, some fighting over seats. Harriet's mum took her cart and pushed it off down the platform.

"Let's go find a seat," she explained, and the rest followed. They passed a round-faced boy who was saying, "Gran, I've lost my toad again."

"Oh, Neville," she heard the old woman sigh.

A boy with dreadlocks was surrounded by a small crowd.

"Give us a look, Lee, go on."

The boy lifted the lid of a box in his arms, and the people around him shrieked and yelled as something inside poked out a long, hairy leg.

They pressed on through the crowd until they found an empty compartment near the end of the train. She put Hedwig, her newly named owl, inside first, then returned to where her father and Sirius were lifting her trunk toward the train door. When they tried to lift it up the steps, however, Sirius let his end drop, and it landed painfully on his foot. He let out a colorful swear.

"That's one I've never heard before." It was one of the red-haired twins she'd followed through the barrier.

"We'll have to remember that," agreed the other one. Sirius shrugged, completely unconcerned that he was being a "horrible influence," to quote Harriet's mum. He and her father finally managed to get the trunk inside with their help.

"Thanks," said her father, turning to the twins, but they had already vanished. Harriet giggled at her father's perplexed look, but squeaked suddenly when she was pulled into a massive embrace. She gasped as the wind was knocked out of her.

"Have a good time, okay?" asked her mother, holding her close. Harriet tried to nod, but found that her mother was holding her too tightly. She settled for a muffled, "I promise."

Her mother let her go, allowing Harriet to see the tears in her eyes. Harriet bit her lip, doing her best not to cry, as well, as her father, Sirius, and Remus all gave her large hugs and last-minute pieces of advice.

"Be good," muttered Remus, after her father had given her a hug. Harriet nodded.

"Don't listen to Remus," stage-whispered Sirius, as he wrapped his arms around her. "Make all the trouble you want, just don't get caught."

Harriet laughed, backing away from him, only to see that he, too, also had unshed tears in his eyes.

The train's whistle blew and Harriet's eyes widened as she realized she was almost late. She ran into the train and into the compartment where her suitcase and trunk were. Leaning out the window, she waved at her family, who smiled at her.

The train began to move and Harriet watched as they got smaller and smaller, still waving broadly. Sirius, when he was sure that nobody was looking, transformed and began chasing the dog as Padfoot, barking loudly. He was the last thing she saw until the train rounded a corner.

She sighed and sat back in her seat, the true magnitude of her situation finally dawning her. After only a few months back with her real family, she was being sent off to a boarding school in...Harriet scowled, realizing she actually had no idea where Hogwarts was.

Why arre you ssssoo sssad pequinina? hissed Isaura from Harriet's ankle. Ever since Harriet had taken to wearing her wand holster on her wrist, Isaura's new favorite perch had become her ankle, as opposed to her arm.

"I'm gonna miss them," sighed Harriet, lifting up her pant leg to get a better view of her friend.

"I thought youu wanted to go to the ssschool?"

"I do!" Harriet protested, "I just-" A tap on the door cut her off. Harriet quickly let her pant leg drop, covering Isaura, who was hissing indignantly, just before the door to the compartment slid open. The red-haired boy from the platform was grinning sheepishly at her.

"Hi," he began, seemingly unsure of himself. "Do you mind if I sit here? Everywhere else is full."

"Not at all," said Harriet, motioning to the seat across from her, desperate for some sort of distraction from the aching pain in her chest.

"Thank," he sighed, relieved. He sat down and made himself comfortable. "I could sit with my brothers, but Fred and George like to play pranks- a lot of the times on me- and Percy is just," he made a face, "Percy."

Harriet laughed.

"I'm Ron, by the way," he continued, looking a bit more relaxed. "Ron Weasley."

"Nice to meet you," Harriet offered. "I'm Harriet Potter."

Ron's eyes widened. "So its true, then? I mean," he hesitated for a moment, "do you really have the-" He stopped short, trying to convey his meaning with just his eyes. Harriet, however, didn't understand.

"The what?" she asked, worried that she had forgotten something important for Hogwarts at home.

"The scar?" he whispered, saying it with a horrified look on his face, as though it were some forbidden word. Harriet, finding his reaction amusing and feeling relieved that it wasn't something more serious, laughed.

"Oh, yea," she lifted up her bangs, showing Ron the lightening shaped scar on her forehead. Instead of gazing it with reverence, Ron just smiled.

"Wicked," he breathed, as Harriet let her hair fall.

"So how do you think our parents know each other?" Harriet asked curiously, wanting to make conversation. Ron shrugged.

"Don't know," he told her. "I think they met through my uncles, Fabian and Gideon. They died in the war against You-Know-Who." He colored a bit, although Harriet wasn't sure why.

"I'm sorry," Harriet grimaced, feeling guilty for bringing it up.

"Its okay," said Ron, in a tone that showed that it wasn't completely okay. "I was really little when they died. I don't even remember them."

"So all your family are wizards, then?" Harriet prodded, eager to draw the conversation away from the current topic.

"Er, yea," nodded Ron, looking glad at the change of subject. "I think mum has a cousin who's an accountant, but we don't really talk about him much. I heard you went to live with Muggles, though, while your parents were, uh..." Ron paused, not really sure what to say, then abruptly asking, "What were they like?"

"They were awful," Harriet admitted. "Well, not all Muggles, but my aunt and uncle were."

"My dad is pretty mad about Muggles," noted Ron, making Harriet raise her eyebrows. "Its true!" he defended. "He works at the Misuse of Muggle Artifacts Office."

"What does he do there?"

"It's all to do with bewitching things that are Muggle-made, you know, in case they end up back in a Muggle shop or house." Ron explained to Harriet. "Like, last year, some old witch died and her tea set was sold to an antiques shop. This Muggle woman bought it, took it home, and tried to serve her friends tea in it. It was a nightmare — Dad was working overtime for weeks."

"What happened?" Harriet demanded, attempting to figure why a teapot would give somebody work for weeks.

"The teapot went berserk and squirted boiling tea all over the place and one man ended up in the hospital with the sugar tongs clamped to his nose. Dad was going frantic — it's only him and an old warlock called Perkins in the office — and they had to do Memory Charms and all sorts of stuff to cover it up —"

"My dad mentioned memory charms for some of our neighbors the day my parents came to pick me up from my aunt and uncle," Harriet said, suddenly remembering.

"Why would they need memory charms?" Ron frowned. Harriet blushed.

"My Uncle started saying some really nasty things about my family," she said slowly, turning away. "I got a bit angry and I kindasortablewhimup." She said this last part in a rush, trying to get it out as fast as she could. Ron seemed to understand her though and laughed.

"Like "Kaboom!" blew him up?" asked Ron.

"More like a balloon," Harriet amended. "He flew out the back-door."

"And you didn't get into trouble?" Ron asked, reverence coloring his tone. Harriet shook her head.

"My dad just seemed to think it was funny," Harriet explained, "and my mom never liked my uncle much anyways."

"If that happened to me," Ron said enviously, "My mom would have grounded me for life. I can't tell you how many times she's let Fred or George have it because one of their pranks."

"You've got three older brothers, then?" Harriet wondered, trying to figure out exactly how large Ron's family was.

"Five," he corrected, looking glum. "and Ginny, whose a year younger. But I'm the sixth go to Hogwarts. You could say I've got a lot to live up to. Bill and Charlie have already left — Bill was head boy and Charlie was captain of Quidditch. Now Percy's a prefect. Fred and George mess around a lot, but they still get really good marks and everyone thinks they're really funny. Everyone expects



me to do as well as the others, but if I do, it's no big deal, because they did it first."

Harriet shifted a bit in her seat, uncomfortable with what Ron was saying.

"You never get anything new, either, with five brothers. I've got Bill's old robes, Charlie's old wand, and Percy's old rat."

Ron reached inside his jacket and pulled out a fat gray rat, which was asleep.

"His name's Scabbers and he's useless, he hardly ever wakes up. Percy got an owl from my dad for being made a prefect, but they couldn't aff — I mean, I got Scabbers instead."

Ron's ears went pink. Harriet looked a bit closer at the rat.

"Is he missing a toe?" she asked incredulously, trying to remember where she had heard that before.

Ron turned Scabbers over to get a better look. "Huh," he made a thoughtful noise. "Yea. He was like that when Percy found him in the garden, I guess. He was hiding from the gnomes."

"Maybe he got into a street fight with some of them," suggested Harriet, mentally amazed at how easily Ron used the word "gnomes," as though it was completely normal. "and thats how he got all banged up."

"That would be the only useful thing he's done," grumbled Ron. Harriet was more focused on Isaura, whom she could feel uncurling from her leg.

"Lunnch," she hissed. It took Harriet a moment to realize what she meant.

"No!" She wasn't quite sure who she was yelling at, Isaura, Ron, or Scabbers, but the shout had the desired effect. Scabbers jumped, barely avoiding Isaura, who had sprung in an attempt to catch him. Ron flattened himself against his seat, watching in pure terror as Isaura, who had landed in his lap, hissed in displeasure.

"Sorry," Harriet gasped, feeling immensely guilty. She took Isaura from Ron. "She's never done anything like that before."

"That's a snake," stated Ron, looking a bit weak.

"Yea," Harriet said, but it didn't seem like Ron heard her.

"You've got a snake with you," he muttered, "and you're bringing it to Hogwarts."

"She was my first friend," Harriet said in defence of her snake. This, it seemed, brought him out of his stupor.

"Oh," he was quiet for moment. "Well," he said firmly, "now you've got two friends. Me and her. If you want," he added unsurely, the tips of his ears turning pink. Harriet felt her cheeks heat up, too. She held Isaura out to Ron.

"Ron, this is Isaura." Ron eyed her cautiously. "Isaura, this is our new friend, Ron."

Harriet Potter, Hogwarts Express- September 1, 1991

"They aren't real frogs," Ron was explaining to Harriet, through a mouthful of licorice wand, "It's just a spell."

When they had begun talking, the train had been moving them out of London. Now, they were swiftly moving past rolling hills and open fields dotted with cows. A woman had come by with a candy cart, and Harriet had gotten a little bit of everything, eager to share with her new friend, who was currently explaining some of the more interesting candies to her.

Harriet opened the small box, revealing a tiny, chocolate frog. Harriet barely had time to get a good look at it when it bounced onto the window. Ron looked up.

"Watch it!" he cried, but Harriet was too shocked to do anything but stare as the frog climbed to the top of the window and, with what Harriet would have sworn was a wave, jumped out. Harriet turned back to Ron, who just shrugged.

"That's rotten luck," he informed her, "they've only got one good jump in 'em anyways. It's the cards you want, though. Each box has got a card with a famous witch or wizard and you can start collecting them. I've got about five-hundred me-self."

Harriet took the card from the carton and looked at it curiously. "I've got Dumbledore," she told Ron cheerfully, recognizing his face on the card.

"I've got about seven of him," Ron said dismissively. "Mind if I take one of these? I may get Agrippa. Thanks," he said, once Harriet assured him it was okay.

"Has anybody seen a toad?" Harriet and Ron both jumped. Neither of them had heard the door to their compartment open. A girl their age was waiting impatiently from the door. She had large front teeth and the bushiest brown hair Harriet had ever seen. "A boy named Neville has lost one."

"I haven't seen it," denied Ron. Harriet shook her head, taking a bite of a peppermint patty. The girl looked at the candy and wrinkled her nose.

"That's not very healthy is it," she said in a bossy sort of voice. "I only eat sugar-free candy, but the cart didn't have any."

"What's the fun of sugar-free candy," scoffed Ron.

"My parents are dentists," said the girl, in a tone of voice that indicated that that should have explained everything. It didn't.

"Dintests?" scowled Ron. "What the ruddy hell is a densit?"

"Dentists," corrected the now annoyed looking girl. "How do you not know what a dentist is?"

Harriet, recognizing that Ron came from one of the older pureblooded families in Britain, explained, "Dentists are like Muggle healers for teeth."

"Muggles are weird," he said in an amazed voice. The girl, who Harriet guessed was either half-blood or Muggle-born, glared at Ron.

so strongly that Harriet wondered why Ron did not recoil from her gaze.

Harriet, paying no mind to the bossy girl, looked over to Isaura and offered her a squirming, chocolate frog. Isaura quickly wrapped her body around it, slowly squeezing it, getting chocolate everywhere.

"Ew," Harriet muttered, wiping her hand on her jeans, while Ron laughed. The bushy-haired girl, who still hadn't left, eyed her snake with distaste.

"Are you sure your snake didn't eat Neville's toad" Harriet shot her a sharp look and Ron looked highly offended, too.

"Isaura wouldn't do that!" Ron scowled. "Would she, Harriet?"

"No, she wouldn't," Harriet affirmed, neither of them feeling it would be prudent to bring up Isaura's earlier stint with Scabbers. The girl didn't look convinced. Instead, she flounced into the car and took a seat across from Harriet, next to Ron.

"Are snakes even allowed at Hogwarts?" she sniffed.

"Er..."

"Because in my acceptance letter, it only mentioned toads, owls, and cats. Of course, my acceptance letter was such a huge shock. Nobody in my family's magic at all, it was ever such a surprise when I found out, but I was ever so pleased, of course, I mean, it's the very best school of witchcraft there is, I've heard — I've learned all our course books by heart, of course, I just hope it will be enough — I'm Hermione Granger, by the way, who are you?"

She said this all so fast that Harriet couldn't help but wonder how she managed to breathe. She looked at Ron and was relieved to see from the look on his face that he hadn't learnt all his course books by heart, either.

"Ron Weasley," was Ron's response, obviously so shocked that he wasn't really paying attention to what he was saying.

"Harriet Potter," said Harriet, shooting her friend amused glances.

"Are you really?" asked the girl wide-eyed. Harriet wondered how famous she must be for even Muggle-borns to have heard of her.

"I know all about you, of course — I got a few extra books, for background reading, and you're in *Modern Magical History* and *The Rise and Fall of the Dark Arts* and *Great Wizarding Events of the Twentieth Century*."

"Am I?" said Harriet, feeling dazed.

"Goodness, didn't you know, I'd have found out everything I could if it was me," said Hermione. "Do either of you know what house you'll be in? I've been asking around, and I hope I'm in Gryffindor, it sounds by far the best; I hear Dumbledore himself was in it, but I suppose Ravenclaw wouldn't be too bad... Anyway, I'd better go and look for Neville's toad. You two had better change, you know, I expect we'll be there soon."

She got up and was about to leave the compartment, but turned back around at the last minute, just as she was walking through the door.

"You have dirt on your nose, by the way," she said to Ron in a condescending tone. She gestured to where it was. "Right there."

Ron took his hand and began to rub his nose slowly, still very confused by Hermione. She left and Ron turned to Harriet.

"Whatever house I'm in," he said surely, "I hope she's not in it." Harriet couldn't help but agree. Ron rubbed his nose again.

"Did I get it?" Harriet shook her head and Ron scowled.

"She was a know-it-all, but she was also right," sighed Harriet, getting up from her seat and reaching for her trunk. Ron grumbled, annoyed, but did the same. "We really do need to get ready."

"I'll leave while you change," offered Ron, holding his robes. Harriet shot him a thankful smile, which quickly turned into a frown. The pale boy from Borgin and Burke's had just entered the compartment. He was flanked by two other boys. Both looked large, thickset, and extremely mean. One had short, bowl-cut hair, framing his beady-

eyes. The other had long arms that reminded Harriet strongly of a gorilla.

"They say Harriet Potter's come to Hogwarts," the boy announced loudly. He turned and gave Harriet a glance over. For a moment, Harriet was worried that he had recognized her from Knockturn Alley, but relaxed when it didn't seem like he had.

"It's true then," he said. It wasn't a question. Harriet watched him warily. He smirked. "That's Crabbe," he gestured to the first boy, then to the second, "and Goyle. I'm Malfoy. Draco Malfoy."

Ron didn't even try to hide his snort. Harriet didn't blame him for laughing, but Draco did, it seemed.

"Think my name is funny, do you?" He scowled. "No need to ask who you are. Red hair and hand-me-down clothes? You must be a Weasley." Ron flushed and Harriet glared when Draco turned back to her.

"You'll soon learn, Potter, that some wizarding families are better than others. I can help you there. You don't want to be making friends with the wrong sort," He held out his hand to her, but she didn't take it, remembering him and his father in Knockturn Alley.

"I think I can figure out the wrong sort for myself thanks," she told him coolly.

"I'd watch myself if I were you, Potter," Draco said slowly, retracting his hand. "If you aren't too careful, you could go the same way as your parents. Or maybe like that blood-traitor they call a friend-"

"Take that back, Malfoy," Ron demanded, as both he and Harriet straightened. He made to grab Malfoy, but Harriet held him back, eyeing Crabbe and Goyle, who were several times larger than they were. She knew that fights with big people versus smaller people rarely ended well for the small people.

"I don't think I will," said Malfoy, looking curiously around the compartment. His eyes landed on the pile of candy on Harriet's seat. "In fact, I think I'll take some of your-AGHH!" he let out a scream because, as he had reached for his candy, Isaura, who had been

hiding underneath the pile, had hissed loudly, making a fake lunge for his hands.

"You've got a snake in here?" a malicious smile overtook the glint of fear in his eyes. "Wait until I tell the professors! You'll be expelled for sure-"

"Actually," Hermione's bossy voice came from behind them, and Harriet watched amazed as the girl managed to squeeze her way into the compartment. It was getting rather crowded. "I asked the professors and they say that Harriet's snake is allowed at Hogwarts." Hermione eyed the five of them. "Fighting, however, is not permitted-"

"Fighting?" Harriet interrupted, speaking calmly. "Whose fighting? Malfoy and his friends here were just telling us that we would be arriving at Hogwarts soon, when Isaura spooked them."

Malfoy didn't say anything, just watched her curiously, trying to figure out what Harriet was up to.

"They were just leaving so Ron and I could change." Harriet raised an eyebrow in Malfoy's direction and he nodded slowly, understanding. She was giving him a way out this time, but next time (and Harriet had a feeling there would be a next time), she wouldn't be so forgiving towards him.

"C'mon, Crabbe, Goyle," he instructed. He lead them both out of the cart, leaving Harriet and Ron alone with Hermione. Judging by Ron's expression, he was having a hard time telling which was worse.

"How is it that we haven't even arrived at school and you two are already causing trouble?" Hermione demanded.

"Not that its any of your business, but they started it." Ron glared at Hermione. "What are you doing back here anyways?"

"I was just going to tell you what the professors said about your snake. You're welcome," Hermione answered, sounding as though they should be thankful for her consideration. Harriet didn't feel very grateful, though.

"Oh yea," said Ron caustically, apparently agreeing with Harriet. "You snitched on us, thats what you did! What if the professors said that Harriet couldn't keep Isaura? Then what? We wouldn't have been so thankful, then."

"You shouldn't have broken the rules in the first place," scowled Hermione, leaving in a huff. Ron and Harriet exchanged looks, then Ron followed her out, giving Harriet a few minutes to change. Harriet did the same for him, then they both made themselves comfortable once again, looking out the windows in hopes to get their first glimpse of Hogwarts.

"So," he asked Harriet while they searched, "How do you know Malfoy?"

"Well, I don't know him, per say," Harriet shrugged, before explaining what had happened to her in Borgin and Burkes. Ron, after pressing for more details about Knockturn Alley, nodded.

"Yea, that sounds about right," referring to the Malfoy's selling something. "My dad's been working overtime at the Ministry with the raids, and he reckons the Malfoys have got a lot to hide, for sure. They were real supporters of You-Know-Who back in the day."

"My dad mentioned that some people followed Voldemort because-" She was cut off by Ron's gasp. "What?"

"You said You-Know-Who's name!" His freckles were standing out against his face. "I would'a thought that you of all people-!"

"I'm not trying to be brave or anything," Harriet said quickly. "I just forgot! I bet I'm the worst in the class," she added, letting go of a fear that had been haunting her for the past few days. Ron shrugged it off.

"Lots of Muggle-borns learn quick enough," he assured her. "So what were you saying about You-Know-Who?"

"Oh," Harriet remembered, "just that a lot of people were forced to follow him, even though they didn't really want to." Ron looked thoughtful for a moment.



"Yea, thats true," he conceded, "but my dad reckons that the Malfoys didn't need to much persuading, if you catch my drift. Are you sure you didn't see what he was selling?" Harriet went to deny it, when a voice cut her off.

"We will be reaching Hogwarts in five minutes' time. Please leave your luggage on the train, it will be taken to the school separately."

Harriet's stomach lurched with nerves and Ron, she saw, looked pale under his freckles. They crammed their pockets with the last of the sweets and joined the crowd thronging the corridor.

The train slowed right down and finally stopped. People pushed their way toward the door and out on to a tiny, dark platform. Harriet shivered in the cold night air. Then a lamp came bobbing over the heads of the students, and Harriet heard a familiar voice: "Firs' years! Firs' years over here! All right there, Harriet?"

Hagrid's big hairy face beamed over the sea of heads.

"C'mon, follow me — any more firs' years? Mind yer step, now! Firs' years follow me!"

Slipping and stumbling, they followed Hagrid down what seemed to be a steep, narrow path. It was so dark on either side of them that Harriet thought there must be thick trees there. Nobody spoke much. Neville, the boy who kept losing his toad, sniffed once or twice.

"Yeh'll get yer firs' sight o' Hogwarts in a sec," Hagrid called over his shoulder, "jus' round this bend here."

There was a loud "Ooooooh!"

The narrow path had opened suddenly onto the edge of a great black lake. Perched atop a high mountain on the other side, its windows sparkling in the starry sky, was a vast castle with many turrets and towers.

"No more'n four to a boat!" Hagrid called, pointing to a fleet of little boats sitting in the water by the shore. Harry and Ron were followed into their boat by Neville and Hermione.

"Everyone in?" shouted Hagrid, who had a boat to himself. "Right then — FORWARD!"

And the fleet of little boats moved off all at once, gliding across the lake, which was as smooth as glass. Everyone was silent, staring up at the great castle overhead. Harriet had seen Hogwarts before, but only from the inside. Nothing compared to how it looked now. It towered over them as they sailed nearer and nearer to the cliff on which it stood.

"Heads down!" yelled Hagrid as the first boats reached the cliff; they all bent their heads and the little boats carried them through a curtain of ivy that hid a wide opening in the cliff face. They were carried along a dark tunnel, which seemed to be taking them right underneath the castle, until they reached a kind of underground harbor, where they clambered out onto rocks and pebbles.

"Oy, you there! Is this your toad?" said Hagrid, who was checking the boats as people climbed out of them.

"Trevor!" cried Neville blissfully, holding out his hands. Then they clambered up a passageway in the rock after Hagrid's lamp, coming out at last onto smooth, damp grass right in the shadow of the castle.

They walked up a flight of stone steps and crowded around the huge, oak front door.

"Everyone here? You there, still got yer toad?"

Hagrid raised a gigantic fist and knocked three times on the castle door.

Harriet Potter, Hogwarts-September 1, 1991

The door swung open at once. A tall, black-haired witch in emerald-green robes stood there. She had a very stern face and Harriet's first thought was that this was not someone to cross.

"The firs' years, Professor McGonagall," said Hagrid.

"Thank you, Hagrid. I will take them from here."

She pulled the door wide. The entrance hall was so big you could have fit the whole of the Dursleys' house in it. The stone walls were lit with flaming torches like the ones at Gringotts, the ceiling was too high to make out, and a magnificent marble staircase facing them led to the upper floors.

They followed Professor McGonagall across the flagged stone floor. Harriet could hear the drone of hundreds of voices from a doorway to the right — the rest of the school must already be here — but Professor McGonagall showed the first years into a small, empty chamber off the hall. They crowded in, standing rather closer together than they would usually have done, peering about nervously.

"Welcome to Hogwarts," said Professor McGonagall. "The start-of-term banquet will begin shortly, but before you take your seats in the Great Hall, you will be sorted into your houses. The Sorting is a very important ceremony because, while you are here, your house will be something like your family within Hogwarts. You will have classes with the rest of your house, sleep in your house dormitory, and spend free time in your house common room. The four houses are called Gryffindor, Hufflepuff, Ravenclaw, and Slytherin. Each house has its own noble history and each has produced outstanding witches and wizards. While you are at Hogwarts, your triumphs will earn your house points, while any rule-breaking will lose house points. At the end of the year, the house with the most points is awarded the house cup, a great honor. I hope each of you will be a credit to whichever house becomes yours. The Sorting Ceremony will take place in a few minutes in front of the rest of the school. I suggest you all smarten yourselves up as much as you can while you are waiting."

Her eyes lingered for a moment on Neville's cloak, which was fastened under his left ear, and on Ron's smudged nose.

Harriet nervously tried to flatten her hair, her movement causing the Professor to look her way. Harriet swore she saw her gaze soften for a moment, and wondered if Professor McGonagall had ever known her parents.

"I shall return when we are ready for you," said Professor McGonagall stiffly. "Please wait quietly."

She left the chamber. Harriet swallowed.

"How exactly do they sort us into houses?" she asked Ron, "My parents wouldn't tell me. They kept saying something about 'tradition.'"

"Some sort of test, I think. Fred said it hurts a lot, but I think he was joking."

Harriet's heart gave a horrible jolt. A test? In front of the whole school? But she didn't know any magic yet —what on earth would she have to do? She hadn't expected something like this the moment they arrived.

She looked around anxiously and saw that everyone else looked terrified, too. No one was talking much except Hermione Granger, who was whispering very fast about all the spells she'd learned and wondering which one she'd need.

Harriet tried hard not to listen to her. She'd never been more nervous, never, not even when she'd had to take a school report home to the Dursleys saying that she'd somehow turned her teacher's wig blue.

She kept her eyes fixed on the door. Any second now, Professor McGonagall would come back and lead her to her doom.

Then something happened that made him jump about a foot in the air — several people behind her screamed.

"What the —?"

She gasped. So did the people around her. About twenty ghosts had just streamed through the back wall. Pearly-white and slightly transparent, they glided across the room talking to one another and hardly glancing at the first years. They seemed to be arguing.

What looked like a fat little monk was saying: "Forgive and forget, I say, we ought to give him a second chance —"

"My dear Friar, haven't we given Peeves all the chances he deserves? He gives us all a bad name and you know, he's not really even a ghost — I say, what are you all doing here?"

A ghost wearing a ruff and tights had suddenly noticed the first years.

Nobody answered.

"New students!" said the Fat Friar, smiling around at them. "About to be Sorted, I suppose?"

A few people nodded mutely.

"Hope to see you in Hufflepuff!" said the Friar. "My old house, you know."

"Move along now," said a sharp voice. "The Sorting Ceremony's about to start."

Professor McGonagall had returned. One by one, the ghosts floated away through the opposite wall.

"Now, form a line," Professor McGonagall told the first years, "and follow me."

Feeling oddly as though her legs had turned to lead, Harriet got into line behind a boy with sandy hair, with Ron behind her, and they walked out of the chamber, back across the hall, and through a pair of double doors into the Great Hall.

Harriet had never even imagined such a strange and splendid place.

It was lit by thousands and thousands of candles that were floating in midair over four long tables, where the rest of the students were sitting. These tables were laid with glittering golden plates and goblets. At the top of the hall was another long table where the teachers were sitting. Professor McGonagall led the first years up here, so that they came to a halt in a line facing the other students, with the teachers behind them. The hundreds of faces staring at them looked like pale lanterns in the flickering candlelight. Dotted here and there among the students, the ghosts shone misty silver. Mainly to avoid all the staring eyes, Harriet looked upward and saw a velvety black ceiling dotted with stars. She heard Hermione whisper, "It's bewitched to look like the sky outside. I read about it in *Hogwarts, A History*."

It was hard to believe there was a ceiling there at all, and that the Great Hall didn't simply open on to the heavens.

Harriet quickly looked down again as Professor McGonagall silently placed a four-legged stool in front of the first years. On top of the stool she put a pointed wizard's hat. This hat was patched and frayed and extremely dirty. Aunt Petunia wouldn't have let it in the house.

Maybe they had to try and get a rabbit out of it, Harriet thought wildly, that seemed the sort of thing — noticing that everyone in the hall was now staring at the hat, she stared at it, too. For a few seconds, there was complete silence. Then the hat twitched. A rip near the brim opened wide like a mouth — and the hat began to sing:

"Oh, you may not think I'm pretty,

But don't judge on what you see,

I'll eat myself if you can find

A smarter hat than me.

You can keep your bowlers black,

Your top hats sleek and tall,

For I'm the Hogwarts Sorting Hat

And I can cap them all.

There's nothing hidden in your head

The Sorting Hat can't see,

So try me on and I will tell you

Where you ought to be.

You might belong in Gryffindor,

Where dwell the brave at heart,

Their daring, nerve, and chivalry  
Set Gryffindors apart;  
You might belong in Hufflepuff,  
Where they are just and loyal,  
Those patient Hufflepuffs are true  
And unafraid of toil;  
Or yet in wise old Ravenclaw,  
if you've a ready mind,  
Where those of wit and learning,  
Will always find their kind;  
Or perhaps in Slytherin  
You'll make your real friends,  
Those cunning folk use any means  
To achieve their ends.  
So put me on! Don't be afraid!  
And don't get in a flap!  
You're in safe hands (though I have none)  
For I'm a Thinking Cap!"

The whole hall burst into applause as the hat finished its song. It bowed to each of the four tables and then became quite still again.

"So we've just got to try on the hat!" Ron whispered to Harriet. "I'll kill Fred, he was going on about wrestling a troll."

Harriet smiled weakly. Yes, trying on the hat was a lot better than having to do a spell, but she did wish they could have tried it on without everyone watching.

The hat seemed to be asking rather a lot; Harriet didn't feel brave or quick-witted or any of it at the moment. If only the hat had mentioned a house for people who felt a bit queasy, that would have been the one for her.

Professor McGonagall now stepped forward holding a long roll of parchment.

"When I call your name, you will put on the hat and sit on the stool to be sorted," she said. "Abbott, Hannah!"

A pink-faced girl with blonde pigtails stumbled out of line, put on the hat, which fell right down over her eyes, and sat down. A moments pause —

"HUFFLEPUFF!" shouted the hat.

The table on the right cheered and clapped as Hannah went to sit down at the Hufflepuff table. Harriet saw the ghost of the Fat Friar waving merrily at her.

"Bones, Susan!"

"HUFFLEPUFF!" shouted the hat again, and Susan scuttled off to sit next to Hannah.

"Boot, Terry!"

"RAVENCLAW!"

The table second from the left clapped this time; several Ravenclaws stood up to shake hands with Terry as he joined them.

"Brocklehurst, Mandy" went to Ravenclaw too, but "Brown, Lavender" became the first new Gryffindor, and the table on the far left exploded with cheers; Harriet could see Ron's twin brothers catcalling.



"Bulstrode, Millicent" then became a Slytherin, who greeted their newest member a little less loudly than the other houses.

She was starting to feel definitely sick now. She remembered being picked for teams during gym at her old school. She had always been last to be chosen, not because she was no good, but because no one wanted Dudley to think they liked her.

"Finch-Fletchley, Justin!"

"HUFFLEPUFF!"

Sometimes, Harriet noticed, the hat shouted out the house at once, but at others it took a little while to decide. "Finnigan, Seamus," the sandy-haired boy next to Harriet in the line, sat on the stool for almost a whole minute before the hat declared him a Gryffindor.

"Granger, Hermione!"

Hermione almost ran to the stool and jammed the hat eagerly on her head.

"GRYFFINDOR!" shouted the hat. Ron groaned.

A horrible thought struck Harriet, as horrible thoughts always do when you're very nervous. What if she wasn't chosen at all? What if she just sat there with the hat over his eyes for ages, until Professor McGonagall jerked it off her head and said there had obviously been a mistake and she'd better get back on the train? What would her family say?

When Neville Longbottom, the boy who kept losing his toad, was called, he fell over on his way to the stool.

The hat took a long time to decide with Neville.

When it finally shouted, "GRYFFINDOR," Neville ran off still wearing it, and had to jog back amid gales of laughter to give it to "MacDougal, Morag."

Malfoy swaggered forward when his name was called and got his wish at once: the hat had barely touched his head when it screamed, "SLYTHERIN!"

Malfoy went to join his friends Crabbe and Goyle, looking pleased with himself.

There weren't many people left now. "Moon"... , "Nott"... , "Parkinson"... , then a pair of twin girls, "Patil" and "Patil"... , then "Perks, Sally-Anne"... , and then, at last —

"Potter, Harriet!"

Harriet stood frozen to her spot for a moment, feeling all eyes turn to her. Ron, thankfully, gave her a light shove toward the hat, forcing her to move. She tried her hardest to ignore the whispers that were circulating.

"Potter, did she say?"

"The Harriet Potter?"

The last thing Harriet saw before the hat dropped over her eyes was the hall full of people craning to get a good look at her. Next second she was looking at the black inside of the hat. She waited.

"Hmm," said a small voice in his ear. "Difficult. Very difficult. Plenty of courage, I see. Not a bad mind either. There's talent, my goodness, yes — and a nice thirst to prove yourself, now that's interesting... So where shall I put you?"

Harriet didn't say anything, honestly not knowing what to tell it.

"Too brash for Hufflepuff," the hat muttered, "and while you have a quick mind, you are definitely not studious enough for Ravenclaw. So Gryffindor or Slytherin?"

At the word "Slytherin," Harriet had a sudden mental image: her parents and Sirius and Remus lying on the floor of a destroyed room, dead. Voldemort was standing over them, but...he wasn't Voldemort anymore. He was her.

Harriet gripped her seat tighter and focused back on the hat, who had been too busy deliberating to pay attention to what she had been thinking.

"Yes," he agreed, "it better be Slytherin. You will do very well there."

He took a breath, getting ready to announce his decision to the hall, but Harriet stopped him with a firm, clear, thought.

"No."

The hat let out a cough, choking on his breath. He regained himself quickly though and, for a moment, he didn't say anything, incredulous.

"What?"

"Not Slytherin," Harriet thought firmly. "Anywhere but Slytherin."

The hat was quiet for another minute, before saying quietly. "I see."

"Are you sure?" he asked after another second. "You could be great, you know. Its all here, in your head. Slytherin would help you on your way to greatness, there is absolutely no doubt about that. Don't you want to be great?"

"Not if it means I have to stab people in the back to do it," Harriet responded after a moment.

"Well," sighed the hat, sounding a bit disappointed, "If you are sure- it better be GRYFFINDOR!"

Harriet heard the hat shout the last word to the whole hall. She took off the hat and walked shakily toward the Gryffindor table. For a moment, nobody clapped, and she wondered how long she had been under there. The twins started applauding, though, and soon everybody was. One of the Weasleys (she assumed it was Percy since he was the only one she hadn't met yet) got up and shook his hand vigorously, while the Weasley twins yelled, "We got Potter! We got Potter!"

Harriet sat down opposite the ghost in the ruff she'd seen earlier. The ghost patted her arm, giving Harriet the sudden, horrible feeling she'd just plunged it into a bucket of ice-cold water.

She could see the High Table properly now. At the end nearest her sat Hagrid, who caught her eye and gave her the thumbs up. Harriet

grinned back. And there, in the center of the High Table, in a large gold chair, sat Albus Dumbledore. Dumbledore's silver hair was the only thing in the whole hall that shone as brightly as the ghosts. Harry spotted Professor Quirrell, too, the nervous young man from the Leaky Cauldron. He was looking very peculiar in a large purple turban.

Next to him, sat Uncle Severus, watching the proceedings with mild indifference, occasionally clapping politely. A few days before she had arrived at Hogwarts, he and her mum and sat down and briefly explained that Snape's role in the previous war called that he maintain a certain facade while at Hogwarts and that he might not be able to be as open about their friendship as he was while at home. Harriet had understood...sort of. Now, she caught his eye and he gave her a subtle nod. She smiled, relieved that he didn't resent her for not being in Slytherin.

And now there were only three people left to be sorted. "Thomas, Dean," a Black boy even taller than Ron, joined Harriet at the Gryffindor table.

"Turpin, Lisa," became a Ravenclaw and then it was Ron's turn. He was pale green by now.

Harriet crossed her fingers under the table and a second later the hat had shouted, "GRYFFINDOR!"

Harriet clapped loudly with the rest as Ron collapsed into the chair next to her. She smiled at him and he grinned back.

Harriet payed no attention to the rest of the sorting. She couldn't stop looking at the Great Hall with its burning candles, the students dressed in their robes, or the teachers looking proudly at their children. Looking at Ron, she saw the same deep, excitement burning in his eyes, and knew that he was thinking the exact same thing she was.

It didn't matter what happened next. They were here. They had made it.

AN: Alright, first let me say that I'm sorry this update took a bit longer than usual. Its the week before spring break, so all of my teachers have decided to give tests and exams and papers and have them all

due on the same day. But, on the bright side, break is almost here, so I should be able to update more frequently.

Second, I used a lot of text from the brilliant J.K Rowling for the Sorting for two reasons. The first is that I thought you might appreciate the faster update. The second being that there is not really anything I wanted to change about the Sorting itself.

That being said, several people have commented saying that Harriet is very Slytherin like and I did toy with placing her in Slytherin (I'm assuming you've read the chapter at this point, but if you haven't, SPOILER ALERT), but I decided to keep her in Gryffindor. Note, however, that unlike in the original Harry Potter, where the Hat only considered placing Harry in Slytherin, the Hat here was actually about to put her in Slytherin, when she decided against it. I want to emphasize in this story Harriet's Slytherin qualities and the fact that, although she knows would have done well in Slytherin, she didn't think it was worth accepting the risk of her turning out like Voldemort.

I hope you enjoy and please review!

tinyrose65

Potter Manor-September 2, 1991

Lily, James, Remus and Sirius found themselves sitting quietly in the living room. It was a rather odd thing for them, as usually they were busy, but today they all happened to have the day off. None of them felt like doing anything, though. A dark mood had settled on the house. Harriet was gone.

James grimaced. He had always looked forward to seeing his child go to Hogwarts-seeing their face light up when they saw the Hogwarts Express, getting letters from them detailing their adventures around the castle. But it was different. He and Lily had so little time with Harriet before she had left. Two months was not enough time...

Of course, there was also the matter of the Philosopher's Stone, which Dumbledore had informed them he was currently guarding at Hogwarts. He assured them that the Stone was well protected and that quite a few enchantments had been placed on it, but, nevertheless, he still wanted several people he could trust from outside of school aware of its presence.

James had appreciated him telling them, but he still felt unbelievably uncomfortable knowing that his daughter was in the same building as the Stone (albeit, a large building).

"I hope she's okay," muttered Lily, looking up from the book she had been unsuccessfully trying to read. James rubbed his wife's shoulders.

"I'm sure she is absolutely fine, Lily!"

"Then why hasn't she written?" demanded Lily, frantic. James opened his mouth to reassure her, when a soft hoot caught their attention. Hedwig sat patiently on the windowsill, a note attached to her leg.

"See, Lils," beamed Sirius as James retrieved the letter, "nothing to worry about!"

"Open it!" urged Remus, not that James needed it. He was already eagerly tearing open the envelope. Lily leant forward excitedly.

"Dear Mum and Dad," he read, "(and Sirius and Remus, if you're reading this!),"

"Smart girl," laughed Remus.

"You were right! Hogwarts is fantastic"

"I told you she was fine," said James smugly, looking at his wife, then continuing to read at her glare.

"( except for Filch. Do you happen to know if his cat is possessed? Ron-from the Platform, remember?-thinks it is)!"

"Ron might be onto something," snorted Sirius.

"Before you ask, I'll tell you that I was sorted into Gryffindor."

The three men cheered loudly and clapped. Lily smiled proudly

"Ron was, too,"

"I'm not surprised," James shrugged. "The Weasleys have been in Gryffindor for as long as I can remember."

" but he sleeps in the Boys' Dorm, while I, well, don't, obviously."

"Obviously," agreed Remus.

"There are three other girls sleeping in the room with me. Lavender Brown and Parvati Patil are nice enough, but they like to talk about girl things like clothes and makeup and boys and mushy-romance films that make me gag."

"I don't blame you, Harriet," laughed Sirius. Lily resisted the urge to remind him that he was talking to a letter and that Harriet was not even remotely close by.

"Thats my girl!" declared James.

"On the other hand, Hermione Granger, the other girl, is really smart."

"That sounds familiar," quipped Remus, smirking in the direction of the red-haired witch in the room.

I mean, its scary. She's apparently read and memorized all of our course books.

"That can't be possible!" frowned Lily.

" I didn't believe her before, but now that I've seen her in a few of our classes, I wouldn't be surprised. She's kinda bossy, though, so Ron and I don't hang out with her much.

She practically lives at the library, anyways."

"Well," laughed Sirius, "that sounds even more familiar!" He quickly ducked to avoid being hit by the pillow Lily aimed at his head.

"Classes are interesting. Professor Sprout is nice, but I don't think Herbology is my thing"

"Wasn't mine either," shrugged Remus, unconcerned.

"(Neville Longbottom, another boy in Gryffindor, is really good at it though)."

"Longbottom?" asked Lily, wide-eyed. "Oh, Neville! The last time I saw him, he was just a baby! It was right before Bellatrix-" Lily stopped short and bit her lip, trying desperately not to tear up.

James took a deep breath and began to read again.

"Transfiguration is interesting,"

The three Marauders smirked and shared looks with each other.

"but its kind of boring trying to turn a matchstick into a needle."

"That was very boring," admitted James, "but don't worry, Harriet! It gets much more interesting!"

"Hermione was the only one able to do it, something she isn't letting anybody forget.



Professor Flitwick is really funny (not intentionally though), but History of Magic has to be the most boring class I've ever been in. Professor Binns was teaching while you were at school, right? Any tips for staying awake?"

"No," Remus apologized, "sorry!"

"Potions was great-even if Uncle Sev had to pretend he hated me."

"I'm glad she understood," sighed Lily, looking much more relieved. "He was worried about that." The Marauders exchanged looks.

"When people say that he favors the Slytherins, they weren't kidding. He really seems to like Draco Malfoy (the boy I saw at Borgin and Burkes), but I can't see why. I don't think I've ever met anybody I hate more than Dudley, but Malfoy has to be it. He's a git."

Sirius snorted.

"I was really looking forward to Defense, but Professor Quirrel spends so much time stuttering that he never has time to teach us anything. Not to mention I always get head-aches in his class."

"You need to have Madam Pomfrey take a look," Lily said immediately.

"I asked Ron if I should go to Madam Pomfrey, but he says its probably just the classroom."

"Well," hesitated James, still a bit unsure, "I suppose that could be it."

"Its foggy and dirty and Professor's Quirrel's turban makes the entire place smell like the toaster did when Dudley put his pet fish in there"

"How could anybody be that stupid?" gaped Remus.

"(No. I don't know what he was thinking)."

"Nobody does," deadpanned Sirius, "because he doesn't think."

"By the way, did you hear about Gringotts? Somebody managed to break in!"

"Yea," James let out a low whistle, "that was something. The Auror department still has no idea who was behind it."

"Dumbledore thinks it has something to do with the Stone," agreed Sirius, "but that information isn't something that can be shared with the Auror department at the moment. Dumbledore feels it would be prudent to wait until later." Sirius shrugged. "It's not very important at the moment. We should still be able to find the person responsible without that information."

"I couldn't believe it. Especially not after seeing the vaults myself! Nothing was taken, though, which I thought was funny. Why break into an empty vault? Actually, the Goblins said that the vault had been emptied earlier that week-they say we were there (kinda coincidental, right?)."

I was thinking about it, and I remember seeing Hagrid putting something small in his pocket the day he rescued me. He mentioned that he had been to Gringotts that day on a mission for Dumbledore."

"Wasn't Hagrid the one who Dumbledore sent to retrieve the Stone from Gringotts?" asked James wearily, not really needing an answer.

"Harriet is too perceptive for her own good," Remus frowned. "You don't think she'll figure it out, do you?"

Sirius scoffed. "I doubt it. As smart as she is, Dumbledore has taken every precaution to keep that Stone a secret."

"I asked Ron if he thought they could be related, but he told me I was being silly and that if Dumbledore wanted something safe, there was no way anybody could take it."

"See," Sirius said.

"I've been having a great time here, but I'm also kind of homesick."

"Oh, Harriet! We miss you, too!" Lily agreed, deciding to ignore the fact that it was incredibly odd to be talking to a letter.

"At first, I felt kind of odd saying that, but I mentioned it to Ron and he reckons that it makes sense since I haven't spent too much time with you since you woke up, which makes a lot of sense."

"That's a good point," James grumbled, "but it doesn't make us feel any better."

"I have to go. Ron is calling. We need to get started on our History of Magic essay."

"Bleh," Sirius made a face.

"I miss you and I can't wait to see you at Christmas."

Love,

Harriet

P.S. Ron says "Hi."

"That was a great letter," sighed Lily, disappointed that her communication with her daughter had been so short.

"It sounds like she's having a great time at Hogwarts," agreed James, feeling infinitely more relaxed than he had earlier.

"Too great a time," sighed Remus. "Honestly! I think I had a point! What if she starts to put things together?"

"Don't worry," soothed Lily. "When we send a reply, we can simply tell her not to worry too much about it and that the Aurors are working on finding whoever is responsible."

"You forget, Lily," retorted Remus, "She's yours and James' daughter! I hardly think that will satisfy her curiosity."

Potter Manor, September 23, 1991

"There is another letter!"

Those were the first words Sirius heard stepping out of the fireplace into James' house, his friend right behind him. He grinned at Lily.

"Brilliant! Have you read it yet?"

"Not yet," denied Lily. "I was waiting for you to get home. I've already Floo'd Remus. He'll be here-" The Floo roared and Remus emerged. "Now," laughed Lily.

The four made themselves comfortable in the kitchen, Lily setting up the food to cook, before Lily opened up the letter and began to read.

"Dear Mum, Dad, Sirius, and Remus,

Thanks so much for your last letter! The chocolate was fantastic (although it didn't last very long)!"

"I didn't think it would," chuckled James.

"I have some rather interesting news. Its not anything bad (actually, its rather good) but I think I should give you fair warning that Dad will probably faint. So have the smelling salts out and ready to use."

"Why would I faint?" pouted James.

"What are smelling salts?" asked Sirius, evidently confused.

"Muggles use the to wake-up people who are unconscious," explained Remus. He rolled his eyes. "Are you sure you took Muggle Studies?"

"We had our first flying lesson yesterday, which was great."

"Flying is fantastic," sighed James and Sirius simultaneously.

"However, about a few minutes into it, Neville (remember, the one whose good at Herbology?) somehow managed to fall off his broom and break his wrist."

"The poor boy!" fretted Lily. "I hope he is okay!"

"While Madame Hooch took him to the hospital wing, Malfoy found Neville's Remembrall."

"Why is this giving me a bad feeling?" Remus rubbed a hand over his face tiredly.

"Neville was always really nice to me and helped me in Herbology and never stared at my scar, so I stood up for him and tried to get it back,"

Lily and James both smiled largely, immensely proud of their daughter for standing up for her friend.

"but Malfoy got onto his broom and flew into the air. I followed him."

"Oh, Harriet!" Lily cried, worried. "Think things through! You don't even know how to fly!"

"It was wonderful! Flying that day was the most amazing feeling in the world! And it was so easy!"

"Or," muttered Sirius, slightly shocked, "maybe she is a complete natural!"

James was almost bouncing in excitement, feeling as though he could explode with pride. He thought he understood what Harriet had meant earlier about him fainting.

"Malfoy didn't expect for me to follow him, though, and threw the ball. I turned my broom down into a dive and managed to catch it right before it hit the ground (Ron swore that I was within a foot of the ground, but I think he was exaggerating)."

"He better have been," Lily said sternly, once again forgetting she was talking to a letter. "We are going to have a serious discussion about not putting yourself in unnecessary danger when you get home!"

"I was completely okay, but Professor McGonnagal, who was watching from her office, was really mad."

"I can imagine," said Sirius, sympathetically.

"At first, I thought she was going to expel me,"

"She wouldn't do that," denied Remus. "Not for a first offense."

"but, instead, she introduced to Oliver Wood, the captain of the Gryffindor Quidditch team."

James' eyes widened.

"I made the team! I'm the new Seeker. No joke! Professor McGonnagal managed to get Professor Dumbledore to bend the first year rule!"

All eyes turned to James, who was openly staring at the letter. Feeling everybody's looks on him he scowled.

"I'm not going to faint!" He tried his hardest to look serious, but the grin overtaking his face was impossible to miss. Finally, he let loose a loud cheer and jumped from his position on a chair. This resulted in him landing rather painfully on the floor, but he was too happy to care.

"James, calm down," said Lily, watching her husband amused. Sirius, too, was getting into it, and now the two had begun to dance in circles. Remus gestured for Lily to keep reading, knowing that they were unlikely to stop anytime soon.

"Apparently, she is very desperate to win this year's Quidditch Cup."

"Or maybe my daughter is a brilliant flyer!" argued James.

"I wasn't sure if I should agree at first,"

"Of course you should!" said all three men simultaneously.

"because I was worried that I would make a fool of myself,"

"You won't," was the general response.

"If McGonnagal was willing to bend the first year rule for you," deduced Remus, "you have to be beyond brilliant."

James scowled. "McGonnagal never bent the first year rule for me...which means Harriet must be a better flyer than I was in my first year...even though she's never been on a broom...Thats unbelievable!"

Sirius laughed.

"Honestly, James," chided Lily, "You're acting as though she's going to play professionally, as opposed to just on her house team!"

James' eyes obtained a dreamy quality to them, no doubt imagining his daughter playing professional Quidditch.

"but Ron told me that Quidditch was a lot of fun"

"It is!" Sirius agreed wholeheartedly.

"and Fred and George (the twins), who are Beaters on the team, said that they would make sure that I didn't get "bloodied up too much" (as I'm sure you can imagine, that was incredibly reassuring)."

"Oh, yes," said Lily dryly.

"Then Hermione (she sort of came out of nowhere) showed me something really wicked: the Quidditch trophy from your seventh year! It had your (that is, Dad's and Sirius's) names and positions on it. You told me you played, but never that you won the Cup!"

"You never asked, Prongslette," James chuckled.

"Not to get sidetracked, but something else interesting happened on our way back to the common room. Ron and Hermione were arguing (as usual)"

Both Remus and Sirius snickered in James' and Lily's direction.

"so we weren't paying too much attention to where we were going and one of the stairs moved".

"Those staircases," remembered Remus fondly.

"We ended up in a part of the castle we had never been in before. When it became clear that we weren't going anywhere anytime soon, we decided to take a quick look around."

Lily had to resist the urge to begin scolding, reminding herself that she would only be talking to a bit of parchment.

"Well, I decided and Ron agreed. Hermione yelled that I had no sense of self-preservation and that Ron had no brains, adding that we were both sure to be expelled for good measure."

"At least somebody has some common sense," muttered Lily, while the Marauders tried not to laugh too loudly.

"Eventually, she gave up and followed us, though, so I guess that means she has no brains or self-preservation, either."

"Never mind," sighed Lily, leaning backwards and crossing her arms.

"We managed to find an unlocked door and opened it. I was hoping for something really spectacular, but all that was there was a mirror."

Lily frowned. Something didn't feel right.

"It was very confusing at first because every time Ron, Hermione, or I looked into it, we saw something different."

"Interesting," mused Remus.

"Ron saw himself as captain of the Quidditch team and head boy. Hermione saw herself with the the highest grades in the school. I saw you guys in the mirror, but there were also a bunch of other people who looked a lot like either mum or dad."

"Our parents?" guessed James. "Maybe grandparents and so on, too?"

"That was when Dumbledore found us. He wasn't angry."

"Dumbledore doesn't usually get mad about things like that," agreed Lily.

"Instead, he explained that the mirror was called the Mirror of Erised and that it showed a person's deepest desires."

"Of course!" Remus said, shaking his head at having forgotten. Lily frowned.



"I understand what Ron and Hermione wanted, but what about Harriet?"

Sirius took the letter and reread it. "Family, I think," he said finally, his voice sounding a bit choked. He handed the letter back to Lily, who began to speak shakily.

"He also warned us that the Mirror was dangerous and that he was going to move it, so we should not go looking for it again."

"That would be a, ah, good idea," agreed Remus, gathering his thoughts.

"I then asked him what he saw in the Mirror. Looking back, it wasn't a good idea, since its a personal question,"

"We need to teach her about tact," Lily scolded her husband, trying to burn the image of her daughter standing in front of the Mirror from her mind.

"but at the time, Dumbledore told me he saw socks because people always buy him books during Christmas, but all he really wants is a way to keep his feet warm."

"Lily," began James.

"Yes, love," she interrupted, "We can get him some socks for Christmas."

"He let us go back to our common room, where Hermione got very huffy and told us that she was going to bed before we got her killed, "or worse, expelled!" Ron thinks that she needs to get her priorities straight, and I can't help but agree."

"That wouldn't be a bad idea!" Sirius said.

"So thats how I found myself siting on my bed, with the curtains closed to avoid Hermione's disapproving looks, writing you this letter to ask you permission to join the Quidditch team. Professor McGonnagal is probably going to send you a letter, too."

"If you do say yes,"

"Did she actually think that we'd say she couldn't?" James wondered.

then Professor McGonnagal says that I will also need a broom. I told her that I could use a school broom,

"No you can't," Sirius and James said at the same time.

"but she says that it wouldn't be good enough. Wood suggested either a Cleansweep or a Nimbus, since I'm Seeker, but I'll be happy with whatever you decide."

"The new Nimbus is supposed to be top of the line," James noted. Lily gave him a careful look.

"I'm not sure if thats such a good idea," she said slowly, "its her first broom and all-" she saw her husband's pained look and sighed. "We'll talk about it later."

"I love you and miss you and I'm counting the days until Christmas."

Harriet"

"P.S. Don't ask me how I know, but did Dumbledore tell you there is a giant three-headed dog in the castle?"

"How in the world did she find out about that?" Remus gasped.

"It says not to ask," pointed out Sirius. Remus gave him a look.

"Do you know why he's keeping it there? Hermione noticed that it was standing on a trap-door. Is it guarding something?"

"I told you the warning wouldn't work!" accused Remus. Lily and James exchanged glances.

"We'll have to try again," agreed James.

Halloween

"Harriet did what?" Lily screeched, looking at Snape in shock. He didn't giver her an answer, merely raising an eyebrow, knowing that

she and the three idiots who had christened themselves the Marauders had heard him perfectly well the first time.

"A troll?" Remus asked, wanting to be sure. "A fully grown mountain troll?"

Snape nodded, wondering how many times he would have to repeat himself tonight. Then, in hopes that it would spare him from talking, he pulled out a letter from his robe pockets.

"From your daughter," he sneered, "hopefully explaining tonight's events."

"Hello, everybody!" Remus began, after unfurling the parchment.

"I'm guessing by now you had a visit or a letter from Professor Dumbledore or McGonnagal or Uncle Sev explaining to you about the troll incident"

"Yes," said Lily, looking a bit more pale than she normally did, "we did."

Seeing Severus looking at her, she quickly explained, "We sometimes talk to the letter. Its a habit we haven't been able to break." She blushed when her friend smirked.

"(save the lectures, Uncle Sev already gave me one)."

"Did you tell her that she needed to think things through before she-" began James.

"Yes," was Snape's response.

"What about how completely dangerous-" Remus brought up.

"Yes."

"Or if she does anything that stupid again she'll be back home-" Sirius started.

"Yes."

"Good job," laughed Lily.

"I thought I would take a second to explain my side of things, which will probably be a bit different compared to what you heard."

Snape's eyes locked on the letter. Now why would that be?

"Somebody probably explained to you that Hermione, having read about Mountain Trolls, thought that she would be able to take on the troll herself and set off in search of it. Ron and I, worried about her safety, followed her and ultimately saved her life."

"That's more or less it," agreed Remus.

"That's not exactly what happened, though."

"Why not?" Lily fretted.

"I guess it all started in Charms class on Halloween, where Flitwick thought it would be a good idea to pair Hermione and Ron together to work on Levitation charms."

"In what world does that make sense?" Remus demanded.

"Ron had some trouble with it, so Hermione decided to try and help him. She didn't do it in a very good way though, ending up coming across as a bossy know-it-all (which she is). It led to Ron insulting her after class and Hermione running off to cry to the girl's bathroom."

"I hear wedding bells!" sang Sirius sarcastically.

"I thought about going after her, but I didn't think she would appreciate comfort coming from Ron's best friend."

James grinned in spite of himself. Lily, seeing his smile, asked him why he was so happy.

"Harriet has a best friend," he informed his wife cheerfully, making her smile as well.

"At dinner that night, I was trying to convince Ron to go apologize to Hermione when Professor Quirrel ran in screaming about a troll."

"Subtlety is not that man's forte," Snape mused.

"We were all heading back to our dorms when I remembered that Hermione was in the girl's bathroom. Ron and I headed off to find her."

"No, no, no!" was Lily's only response.

"I know we should have gone to a professor, but I didn't think that the troll would be so far from the dungeons."

"I suppose she has a point," Remus conceded.

"We were wrong. You know what happened from there: Ron and I tried to distract the troll to give Hermione a chance to get away and, when that didn't work, I jumped on its back and got my wand up its nose."

"We didn't know that part," James said, trying to get the image of his daughter dangling off a troll's back out of his mind.

It tried to hit me with its club, so Ron (thinking desperately) tried the first spell he could think of, the Levitation charm. The club was lifted and up and fell on the troll's head, knocking it out! Ron, Hermione, and I were all perfectly fine, save for a few cuts and bruises.

"I hope they realize how lucky they are," Remus pointed out, frowning.

"The professors came in at that point and Hermione did something nobody was expecting. She lied. To a professor. She told the professors the story you heard and they believed her."

Everybody looked at Snape, who scowled and said nothing.

"In case you were wondering, Hermione is now one of mine and Ron's best friends."

"Didn't they hate her several paragraphs ago?" laughed Sirius.

"It might be a bit quick, but there are some things that you can't go through without becoming friends and taking down a fully grown Mountain Troll is one of them."

"Can't argue with that logic," Remus said, chuckling.

Please don't ground me!

Love,

Harriet

P.S. Thank-you! Thank-you! Thank-you! Thank-you so much for the Nimbus 2000! Its fantastic!

James smiled happily, glad that he had been able to convince his wife to let Harriet have the Nimbus. It was much better than the Cleansweep.

I had my first Quidditch practice a few days ago and it went great. Wood threw golf-balls for me to catch. I didn't miss any and Wood was so excited he kept me playing until it got dark.

"She didn't miss any!" cheered a delighted James. Snape scowled thinking about the chances of Slytherin winning the Cup.

I don't understand what was the big deal, but I didn't feel like raining on his parade. He was practically skipping on his way back to the castle.

P.P.S. I noticed while Uncle Sev was lecturing me that his leg was hurt.

Almost immediately, Lily was up and fussing over her friend's hurt leg. He tried to tell her he was fine, but she gave him a glare so cold that he could do nothing more than sit patiently and let her look him over. While she did, Remus continued reading.

Judging by the wound, it looked like he tried to get past the three-headed dog (which you still haven't told me anything about, by the way!). I asked him about it, but he told me not to worry.

"Were you?" frowned James.

"Yes," Snape answered. "Upon hearing that a troll was let in, I believed that somebody had let it in as a diversion to attempt to get

to the Stone. Sadly, I did not anticipate having that much trouble with the dog and I scared whoever it was off."

Sirius grumbled, disappointed that Snape had been unable to catch the man responsible.

Hermione thinks that he is trying to get past whatever the dog is guarding (and that would be...?) Does it have anything to do with the Gringotts break-in?

"You're daughter," scowled Snape, "needs to learn to keep her nose out of other people's business!"

Both Lily and James grinned sheepishly.

Potter Manor-November 29, 1991

"Honestly, James," Lily laughed as she came down the stairs. Her hair was still damp from her shower and she had dressed herself comfortable in preparation for a few hours of relaxation. The image of her husband continuously looking at the window was what had greeted her when she had come home, and that was where she found him now.

"The letter will come when it comes!" she admonished.

"Its the first Hogwarts Quidditch game!" he told her excitedly, "I want to know how Harriet did! Whether or not Gryffindor won!"

"Are you doubting you're daughter's Quidditch skills?" she teased, pulling him away from the window and onto the couch.

"No!" he protested laughing. He smirked. "She's my daughter after all!"

"The poor girl!" both Lily and James turned and saw Remus's head in the fireplace. "Mind if I come through?"

"Not at all," Lily smiled. Remus entered the house, followed moments after by Sirius.

"I don't remember inviting you," chided Lily.

"It was implied," was Sirius's retort.

"With all the time you two spend here," chuckled James, "People would think that you do not have your own house!"

"We've been separated for ten years," Remus shrugged, unconcerned. "We have a lot of time to make up for."

An awkward silence descended on the room for a moment, broken by the sound of an owl.

"Hedwig's here!" exclaimed James, running to the window. Sirius looked at him, confused.

"It's the first Gryffindor Quidditch match today," explained Lily, "and James is very eager to see how Harriet did."

Sirius suddenly looked much more interested.

"Dear Mum, Dad, Sirius, and Remus"

"I love how she is able to predict who will be reading her letters," giggled Lily.

"We had our first Quidditch game today! I was really nervous, but Ron and Hermione were really supportive. They even made me a sign that said 'Potter for President!'"

"That was very nice of them," Sirius nodded. He turned to Remus. "Why didn't you ever make me a sign, Moony?"

"I was too busy commentating, Padfoot," Remus responded, "and I couldn't show a bias."

"Yea," laughed James, "you did that very well, didn't you? What do you call storming onto the field in fourth year during a game demanding that the Slytherin team be penalized for hitting me with a Bludger?"



"That was a completely fair call!" argued Remus. "You were nowhere near enough to their end of the field to score a goal! It was completely unprovoked!"

Lily cleared her throat pointedly, and James continued to read.

"The game started out normally enough: Gryffindor made a few great scores, much to the annoyance of the Slytherins."

Sirius and James high-fived each other.

"That's when they started playing really dirty (dirtier than they normally do), managing to make a few goals of their own."

James, Remus, and Sirius booed. Lily looked at Remus, surprised.

"Remus!" she laughed. He smiled apologetically.

"Sorry. It's easy to get carried away!"

I saw the Snitch, at one point,

"Go, Harriet!" cheered Sirius.

but one of the Slytherin Beaters hit a Bludger at me and I lost sight of it.

"He better have been penalized for that!" growled Sirius, sounding a lot like his animagus form. James glared at the parchment, as if it had been the one to hit his daughter with a Bludger.

I'm still not sure what happened after that, but all I know is that my broom began acting very oddly.

"What?" asked Lily, startled. "That's not possible!" She turned to her husband accusingly. "You told me the Nimbus had a large number of safety features! That's the only reason I agreed to let Harriet have it!"

"It does!" James said, sounding as worried as his wife.

It was bucking around and trying to kick me off it! It took a few minutes, but eventually, it stopped.

"Hm," hummed Remus thoughtfully.

I got the following story from Ron and Hermione:

"Hermione and I"

"Why are you talking like that?" interrupted Lily, looking at her husband as though he had grown an extra head.

"It's Ron talking now," he told her, showing her the letter, "see?"

"And that's your 'Ron' voice?" teased Sirius.

James didn't deem this worth an answer.

"We were watching the game when Hagrid noticed that Harriet's broom was acting funny. At first, I thought maybe the Bludger had done something to it-"

"Honestly, Ronald!"

"Your Hermione voice is worse," quipped Remus, catching on to what was happening.

"Did you actually think that? Use your brain! Brooms, especially a racing broom like the Nimbus, will be built to withstand the abuse enacted on them by things like Bludgers!"

"Exactly," praised Remus. "It had to have been dark magic to mess with a broom that way." Seeing the parents' worried looks he said quickly, "Don't worry! I'm sure a professor noticed. and helped her"

"Well excuse me! I was too worried about my best friend falling to her death to think about that!"

"Harriet and Ron seem close," pointed out Remus, hoping to bring the minds of James and Lily to happier matters. It worked, as they both smiled.

"Are you implying that I wasn't worried?"

"And Hermione," added Sirius.

"You know what? Let me tell my side of the story than you can tell yours! What was I saying? Oh yea, Harriet's broom was acting very odd. It went on for a few minutes, while Fred and George flew under her to try and be ready to catch her if she fell."

Lily let out a breath, feeling a bit more relieved.

"Using my binoculars, Hermione noticed-

Its my turn now, Ron!

Alright! Alright! Don't get you're knickers in a twist!

How charming."

"They fight worse than you two did," laughed Sirius, partially at the argument and partially at James having to switch voices so quickly, looking at James and Lily, who blushed.

"Anyways, I noticed through Ron's binoculars that Professor Snape was jinxing the broom"

"No," denied Lily quickly. "Snape wouldn't do that!"

No he wasn't! You don't know that for sure!

I recognize a jinx when I see one! He was muttering words and he wasn't blinking, since you have to maintain eye-contact!"

"We have to hear his side of the story first," Lily snapped, as the Marauders grew angry. Sirius scowled at her.

"You heard what Hermione er..wrote!"

"There has to be another explanation!" Lily said in defense of her friend. She decided to try and use logic. "Even you can't deny that Snape is not an idiot. If he wanted to jinx Harriet, do you actually think he would be foolish enough to do it in front of dozens of professors and hundreds of students?"

They had no answer.

"We have to hear his side of the story," she repeated firmly. James backed down, knowing how stubborn his wife could be, and began to read.

"So, while Ron stayed behind, I ran down the bleachers where Snape was with the other teachers. Then I...well, I

She set fire to his robes! It was bloody brilliant!"

"Yes," laughed Sirius, "it was!" Seeing Lily's frown, James nudged her a bit.

"Come on, Lily," he prodded, seeing her struggling to stop from smiling, "it was a bit funny!"

She shoved his shoulder, hard, when her smile became too pronounced to hide.

"Everybody started panicking and I think Professor Quirrel even wet himself!"

"Poor man," Lily grimaced.

"He did not! He did fall over, though. I felt bad about that. But the important part was that Harriet had control of her broom!"

"Thank god," Lily said.

"Well, not completely. She fell, but not very far."

"What?" Lily squeaked.

"She still managed to catch the Snitch, though!"

The Marauders began to cheer and whistle and catcall. Lily let them celebrate for a moment, before having them calm down and finish the reading the letter.

"Catch it, Ron? She nearly swallowed it!"

"That's one way to do it," Sirius said, a bit surprised. James chuckled at the image of his daughter coughing up a Snitch.

So? We still won the game!

Yes, but-

"Okay! Thanks guys!" James said, relieved to finally be able to go back to reading in his normal voice. His throat had been getting tired.

"So, thats the story, more or less. I know what it seems, but Uncle Sev would never do that!"

Lily nodded to herself, glad that she would not have to convince another person to hear Severus out, even if she herself was unsure of his true motives.

"I tried to talk to him after the game, but Hermione and Ron wouldn't let me out of their sight and dragged me down to Hagrid's hut for tea.

While we were there, by the way, Hagrid let it spill that the three-headed dog was his! Apparently his name is Fluffy! Only Hagrid!"

"Well," Remus said, trying to bring the letter to a positive close, "at least it seems like she has forgotten about the Stone and that she is satisfied with the explanation of the dog belonging to Hagrid."

"Fluffy!" Sirius shook his head. "Did you ever notice that, with Hagrid, the more harmless the name, the more dangerous the animal?"

"One more month!

Love,

Harriet and Ron and Hermione"

"That was an insightful letter," Sirius commented, looking at Lily carefully. She threw her hands up in exasperation.

"I'm telling you, Severus didn't try and jinx Harriet! If you are so eager to be proved wrong, though, I can Floo call him right now!"

"Please do," Sirius challenged, crossing his arms over his chest. Lily huffed and quickly made her way to the fireplace, grabbing some Floo powder off the mantle as she did so. She threw it into the fireplace.

"Professor Snape's Office, Hogwarts," she ordered, before sticking her head inside. Sirius couldn't hear what was said, but she emerged a minute later, making room for Snape to follow. He didn't even have time to issue a greeting when Sirius verbally attacked him.

"What the hell were you thinking?" he demanded, making a grab for him, only to be restrained by Remus. "Jinxing Harriet's broom!"

"Sirius!" Lily screeched, hitting him hard upside the head. He continued to scowl at Snape, who looked indifferent to the proceedings.

"I didn't jinx your precious goddaughter, Black."

"Then explain why Hermione saw you muttering words under your breath and not blinking!" Sirius retorted, a bit incoherently. Snape understood, though.

"Did you ever consider, mutt, that counter-jinxes also require eye-contact?"

Sirius blinked, realizing that, no, he had not considered it. Lily grinned triumphantly at Sirius's rather befuddled expression.

"But then why did the broom work properly after Hermione set your robes on fire?" Sirius tried, desperately.

"Granger did what?" Snape snapped.

"Nothing," Sirius said quickly. Lily, remembering something she had read in Harriet's letter, picked up the parchment and read through it.

"Here," she interrupted the glaring contest between the two men by shoving the letter under their noses. "Hermione wrote that, in the confusion, Quirrel was knocked over!"

"Did you know it was Quirrel jinxing the broom?" asked James. Snape denied it.

"I did not," he said slowly, thinking over his words. "However, as he is only new professor at the school this year, I had my suspicions

about him. I will report this to the Headmaster, but I doubt anything can be done-

"Nothing can be done?" repeated Remus, annoyed. "He tried to kill Harriet!"

"According to who?" challenged Snape. "The suspicions of an ex-Death Eater? Or the words of an eleven year old Muggle-born, who, as it happened, believed the formerly mentioned ex-Death Eater to be guilty?"

"Yes?" said Sirius, evidently confused, "er no?" Snape resisted the urge to make a comment about his lack of intelligence, instead settling for waiting for him to figure it out. Finally, realization dawned on face.

"Oh," he said sheepishly, "right."

"Then what do we do?" Lily interrupted.

"I'll warn the headmaster and keep a closer eye on Quirrel."

"That doesn't seem like much," griped James.

"Its the only other option we have." Snape responded. "Lets just hope that this little stunt has taught your daughter to be a bit more wary for her safety than she had been previously. The last thing we need is her making Quirrel's job easier."

AN: Alright! So, whenever I read AU Harry Potter stories about Harry's life with his parents, I would always get annoyed when they would skip Harry's life at Hogwarts and just use letters. But, when I was writing this, I really didn't want to have to write out Harriet's entire year. So, I compromised and had Harriet write the letters, then wrote her parents' reactions. Kinda of like those they-read-the-books fics.

Anyways, I know I said I would be able to update more frequently, but I was wrong. If its any consolation, I spent a lot of my time planning out Harriet's second year, so its not like I haven't been working. That being said, I don't want to write Harriet's second year unless I'm sure you guys want it. So review and let me know if you want me to stop at year one (quit while you're ahead and all that,

right?) or if you want me to keep going. In all honesty, I'll probably keep going, regardless. The question becomes more of whether or not I'll post Harriet's second year (if I do, it'll be under the same title).

Enjoy! Please review and let me know! And have a great week!

xoxo,

tinyrose65

p.s. I'd just like to thank everybody whose subscribed or favorited my story. It means a lot 3



Harriet Potter, The Great Hall, Hogwarts- December 21, 1991

The small scream pierced the hall as a sword cut through the air, showing no mercy. Pieces of rubble scattered around the table.

"Checkmate," said Ron triumphantly. Harriet scowled at him and moved to examine the chessboard. Sure enough, after Ron's gory destruction of her knight, her king was cornered with no way out. With an annoyed huff, she toppled it over, signifying defeat. Ron grabbed his spoils: the chocolate frog-the last of what her parents had sent her.

"Thats completely barbaric!" Ron and Harriet turned around in time to see Hermione entering the Great Hall, lugging a massive suitcase behind her. When she sat down next to them, she was out of breath and panting slightly.

"Thats Wizard's chess," Ron informed her cheerfully. At least, that was what Harriet assumed he was saying. It was difficult to understand him through the mouthful of chocolate. Hermione shook her head disgustedly.

"I see you've packed," Harriet offered, trying to diffuse the tension between her two bickering friends. Hermione gave a curt nod and turned to Ron.

"I see you haven't," she snapped at him. Harriet sighed and gave up, choosing, instead, to sit back and watch. Ron raised his chin defiantly.

"Change of plans," he informed her, "My parents are going to visit my brother Charlie. He's studying dragons there."

"So I guess there is no chance of asking your parents who Nicolas Flamel is, then," sighed Hermione, disappointed. Harriet was just happy that the two hadn't gotten into a shouting match, something that was relatively common for them.

"No," agreed Ron, then adding, more brightly, "You can ask your parents! That'd be safe!"

"Very safe," Hermione said drily, "as they're both dentists."

"Oh right," Ron grumbled dejectedly, taking the final bite of his chocolate frog. Hermione turned to Harriet and looked at her appraisingly. Harriet braced herself for what she knew was coming.

"You could ask-"

"No."

"You didn't even-"

"The answer is still no."

"You don't even know what I was going to say! That's hardly fair!"

"I don't care. I'm not asking my parents about Nicolas Flamel."

"Why not?" demanded Hermione, obviously annoyed that Harriet had guessed her motives. It hadn't been difficult, since they had had this conversation several times before.

"I already told you," Harriet stressed, "They've been asking me for weeks to let this whole thing go. I don't want them to think that I'm not listening to them."

"But you aren't listening to them," Ron pointed out. Harriet threw a chess piece at Ron, who had found the one flaw in her almost perfect plan. The guilt had been eating at her for weeks, but, as usual, her curiosity had overridden all else.

"They don't know that," Harriet retorted, ignoring Hermione's slightly disapproving stare. "Besides, just because I can't ask them any questions, doesn't mean I can't do any digging. We have a massive library back home, with tons of books that aren't here at Hogwarts."

"I suppose that'd be okay," conceded Hermione, trying not to let on how much the idea of solving the mystery enticed her. "I just wish we had a way to communicate over break. I don't have an owl and Errol is too old to make long flights, so all we would have is Hedwig."

"That would take too long," Ron dismissed tactlessly.

"It would tire her out, too, Ronald," Hermione informed the red-head tersely. Ron let out a slightly embarrassed laugh.

"Oh, right," Ron muttered. He gave Harriet a careful look. "Don't tell her I said that, would ya?" Ron, Hermione, and Harriet had learned very early on that Hedwig had quite the attitude, and that she was unafraid of showing her opinion when displeased, usually with the use of teeth and talons.

"I won't," Harriet said half-heartedly, not really paying attention. She was thinking about the two small packages in her trunk, wrapped in sparkly gift-wrap and ready to be given to her friends, come Christmas day.

"I might have a solution," she said carefully, "if you wouldn't be opposed to exchanging Christmas gifts a bit early-"

"Why would be against that?" laughed Ron, eyes bright with the thought of presents. Hermione, too, looked very pleased.

"We have enough time before the train leaves in a few hours," she exclaimed, jumping up from her seat. The three hurried quickly to the common room, which was overflowing with students saying their last goodbyes to each other around the Christmas tree.

Harriet and Hermione split up from Ron as they each headed to their respective dorms. Hermione stayed downstairs as she already had her luggage with her, along with her gifts. Harriet managed to find her trunk and, with some hasty digging, procured her gifts. Studiously ignoring Lavender and Parvati's weepy good-byes, she headed back downstairs. She exchanged looks with Ron, who had also just returned, and Hermione, as all three of them came to the realization that the common room was just too noisy.

"We could head up to the boys' dorm" Ron offered. "Its a lot quieter."

"Why is it that girls are allowed in the boys' dormitories, but not other other way around?" Harriet wondered aloud while the trio was hastily ascending the steps.

"Its an ancient rule that dates back to when Hogwarts was first built," Hermione said matter-of-factly. "Apparently, girls were more trustworthy than boys. Anybody who has read Hogwarts, A History would know about it!"

"So only you?" Ron asked, sounding dead serious. Harriet laughed and Ron pushed open the door. The boys' dormitory, Harriet discovered, looked exactly like the girls' dormitory only instead of being filled with fashion magazines, cosmetics, and posters of the latest actor or rockstar, it was filled with sports magazines, Quidditch posters, and several pairs of underwear littering the floor.

Both Harriet and Hermione couldn't hide their snickers as Ron hastily grabbed his underpants and stuffed them under his pillows.

"Alright then," he said calmly, plopping lazily on his bed. He held out his two presents. "Who first?"

"Open mine!" Hermione said eagerly, giving both Harriet and Ron their gifts. Harriet raised an eyebrow when she felt the familiar shape of a book, but was pleasantly surprised when she opened it.

"Its a homework planner," Hermione explained, "each month shows a new Quidditch move for you to try and each day lists an important accomplishment for women in Quidditch."

"Thats brilliant, Hermione," Harriet thanked. She turned to Ron and laughed at his awestruck expression. He was flipping through a large book of pictures of Quidditch players. Their bright orange robes told her that they were the Chudley Cannons, Ron's favorite team.

"Thanks, Hermione," he breathed, flipping to another page. Hermione flushed, very pleased. Ron gave the book one last look before putting it down. He pulled out his two gifts, wrapped in plain brown paper and each a similar size and shape.

"I didn't really have any money to spend," he said, uncomfortable, "so they may not be as nice as-"

"Shut up, Ron."

"Honestly, Ron! Like we care!"

Harriet made quick work of her paper and, once it was gone, stared at the gift. It was a picture resting in a simple frame. The photo showed herself, Ron, and Hermione walking down one of the

Hogwarts corridors, laughing at something one of them had said. Harriet grinned at Ron, who was looking a tad awkward.

"Where did you get the picture?" Harriet asked, not remembering anybody with a camera there.

"Its a spell," Ron explained, obviously glad that neither Harriet or Hermione were going to go all mushy on him. "Its a bit advanced, but I convinced Percy to help me. I told him I was trying to get extra-credit in Charms."

Harriet chuckled and Hermione tutted disapprovingly. Then, the two girls exchanged glances. Wearing identical smirks, they simultaneously threw themselves at Ron and began to sob hysterically.

"Oh, Ronald!" Hermione fake cried, "Its just so-so-so beautiful!"

"What did I do to deserve a friend like you?" exclaimed Harriet.

"Alright, alright alright!" Ron squawked. He squirmed and, after a few seconds, finally managed to get both girls off of him. He expected to have to console them or get them a tissue or something (his mother had made sure to teach him how to treat girls, telling him that he would thank her for it later), so he was shocked to see his two friends laughing and rolling on the floor.

"Your face," gasped Harriet through her laughter. Hermione was trying to catch her breath, holding her side.

"That wasn't funny!" he said indignantly. Both girls giggled.

"Yes it was," denied Hermione, and by the grin forming on Ron's face, he reluctantly had agreed.

"Open my presents now," Harriet instructed. "The train is leaving soon."

She handed them each their gifts, which they opened with the same relish as they had the other ones. Hermione was the first to finish, but instead of the smile Harriet had been hoping for, she wore a confused frown. Harriet's grin dropped.

"You don't like it?"

"What?" Hermione's eyes widened. "Oh no, Harriet! Its lovely, I'm just a bit confused. You said our gifts would solve our communication problem."

"They will," affirmed Harriet. Ron raised an eyebrow and held up his gift.

"How is a mirror supposed to help us talk to each other?" Harriet laughed.

"They aren't normal mirrors. My dad and his three best friends made them in school so they could talk to each other in detention in stuff. Sirius gave them to me on my birthday and now I'm giving them to you. I've got one more in my trunk."

"Three-way mirrors," exclaimed Ron, "thats wicked!"

"It was originally four-way," Harriet agreed, "but the fourth one is...lost," Harriet finished lamely. If Ron and Hermione picked up on it, they didn't say anything. They were too busy playing with their reflections on the mirror.

"I can see you, Hermione," he said to Hermione's image on the mirror. Hermione nodded eagerly.

"I can see you, too!" Hermione laughed. She cocked her head to the side. "Harriet?"

"Yea, Hermione?"

"You said your father and his friends made these mirrors."

"They did," Harriet said, not quite sure where Hermione was going.

"Well, that means they are one of a kind," Hermione frowned.

"Probably," Harriet shrugged, unconcerned.

"Are you sure you want to give them to us?" Hermione questioned. Ron looked up sharply. "I mean, you said Sirius gave them to you-"

"Sirius gave them to me so I could use them." Harriet interrupted. "Not so that they would sit in my trunk unused for the rest of my life. He knew that I'd be giving some of them away to my friends."

"Are you sure you want to give them to us, though?" Ron asked. "What if you change your mind or something?"

This time he was the one looking unsure, holding the mirror as though Harriet might change her mind and try to snatch it away. Harriet felt a warm feeling of affection swell in her heart when she looked at her two friends, both of whom were so concerned that she would regret her decision.

"I'm positive," Harriet said resolutely. "I'm not going to change my mind anytime soon."

Harriet Potter, Kings Cross- December 21, 1991

Both Harriet and Hermione sat patiently on Harriet's trunk at King's Cross. Legs dangling over the sides, they watched as the other kids wandered around, looking for their parents. Some of the reunions were filled with tears and laughter, while others were a bit more quiet. Neither of them talked, just enjoying each other's company.

"Sugar Quill?" offered Hermione. Harriet took one.

"Thanks," she said, sucking on one. She smirked. "What happened to only sugar-free candy?"

"I did some research," Hermione said, "Apparently most brands of wizard candy are charmed against cavity and tooth-decay." Harriet nodded and took another suck, honestly not caring. To her, candy was candy and candy was good.

"Hey, Prongslette!" Harriet jumped, as she felt two arms wrap themselves around her and lift her up. Hermione, so startled, fell off her seat on the trunk. Harriet was too busy giving her father a hug to notice, though. She hadn't realized how much she had missed her parents until she stood there hugging them.

"Dad," she mumbled into his robes. She felt him chuckle and hug her closer.

"Miss me?" he joked. She looked up at him and nodded, making him smile.

"What about me?" came a softer voice from next to them.

"Mum!" Harriet abandoned her father and launched herself at her mother, who returned her hug with equal fervor. It felt so good to seem them again.

"So thats how it is then?" her father joked. "One minute you're all lovey-dovey and the next I'm being left for a pretty witch with great hair?" Harriet mother rolled her eyes.

"Mum can cook," Harriet pointed out and her father laughed and nodded. "Are Moony and Padfoot here?"

"No," James admitted. "Neither could get the day off. They'll be at the house later for your 'Welcome Home!' dinner, though." Harriet didn't even try to convince them that she didn't need a welcome home dinner, but she knew that it would be pointless. She had inherited her stubborn streak from both her parents.

Harriet looked and noticed Hermione picking herself up off the ground.

"Hermione?" Harriet asked, offering her friend her hand to help pull her up. "What are you doing on the ground?"

"I fell over," she said, obviously annoyed, although she took Harriet's hand anyways. She managed to stand up and straightened up her robes.

"Are you okay?" Harriet asked as Hermione brushed herself off. "Are you hurt?"

"No," Hermione assured, then she grimaced. "Just my pride."

"Well, you have plenty of that," Harriet dismissed, waving her hand, "it probably cushioned the blow. You'll be fine." Hermione hit Harriet upside the head with her box of Sugar Quills. It may have been almost empty, but it still was not a pleasant sensation.

"Ow," she hissed, "Okay, um...Sorry. Just kidding"



"You better have been," Hermione told her loftily. Harriet, still rubbing the sore spot on her head waved Hermione towards her parents, who had been watching the proceedings, amused. Hermione straightened and waited patiently for Harriet to introduce her.

"Mum, Dad," she said, "this is Hermione. Hermione these are my parents."

"Its a pleasure to meet you," Hermione said simply, offering them her hand. Harriet resisted the urge to laugh as each of her parents introduced herself. Hermione was acting as if this was a business agreement. Harriet's mum smiled.

"Are your parents coming to pick you up, Hermione?" Hermione nodded and began scanning the crowd, which had already begun to thin out.

"They should be here somewhere-" Hermione muttered, before her eyes lit up. "There they are!" She beamed. She grabbed her luggage. "It was a pleasure meeting you!"

"It was nice to meet you, too," her father said. Hermione turned to Harriet and grabbed her sleeve, pulling.

"I want to introduce you to them," Hermione ordered and Harriet laughingly agreed, letting Hermione pull her along. Hermione's parents were looking a bit out of place in the station, obviously still uncomfortable with the idea of magic. They relaxed considerably at the sight of their daughter.

Harriet stood to the side politely while Hermione greeted her parents with a warm hug for each of them. When they had finished, Hermione moved to her side and pushed Harriet forward, eagerly.

"Mum, Dad," she said smiling, "this is my friend Harriet, the one I told you about."

"Hello," Harriet said unsurely. What exactly had Hermione told her parents about her? She gave them a small smile. "Its nice to-OOMPH!"

Harriet found herself being held hard by Hermione's mum, who was thanking her over and over and over again. Harriet tried to squirm out of her grasp, but couldn't do it. She felt herself getting a bit lightheaded. Hermione understood her plight, though.

"Mum! Let her go! You're choking her, Mum!" Hermione's mum released her and Harriet was able to stumble backwards, gasping for breath. Hermione's mother looked sheepish, but Harriet waved away her concern.

"I'm fine," she wheezed. She took another deep breath. "What are you thanking me for?"

"You save Hermione from a troll," Hermione's father told her, saying the word troll slowly, as if learning another language and not yet familiar with the terminology. Harriet shifted her weight on her feet.

"It was nothing?" She posed, but when it was clear Hermione's parents were not going to take that as a really answer, she tried a different tactic. "Well," she shrugged, "it wasn't nothing, but Ron and Hermione and I became friends afterwards, so it was worth it."

Hermione's parents grinned at this, as did Hermione. Harriet turned around and saw her mother and father waiting patiently for her. "I need to go.."

"Of course, dear," Hermione's mum said, her brome eyes (the same as Hermione's) looking warmly at her.

"Happy holidays!" added her father, while Hermione gave her one last hug goodbye. She waved to them and then jogged over to her parents. She smiled when she reached them, slightly out of breath.

"Ready?" posed her father. Harriet nodded.

"Yea," she answered, "lets go home."

Potter Manor-December 21, 1991

With a satisfied nod, Harriet finished putting everything away in her room. Isaura was watching uninterested from her small tree. Hedwig had stayed behind at Hogwarts. Harriet turned to her snake.

"Its good to be home, isn't it?" asked Harriet. Isaura nodded and curled up tighter around the tree, apparently tired from the long train ride and not in the mood to talk. Harriet getting the message, left her room, closing the door quietly behind her. She made her way to the kitchen, where her mother and father were both drinking tea, the cooking supplies behind them beginning to make dinner.

For some reason, she stopped outside the doorway, listening in to what they were saying. She wasn't sure what made her do it; maybe it was a delayed reaction from living with the Dursleys, where she would often check her Uncle's mood before entering a room.

"Are you sure its a good idea to have them over, Lily?" her father was asking. Her mother sighed and then shrugged.

"I don't know. I just feel bad that they are spending the holidays all alone." Her father frowned.

"Yes, but if Harriet-

"Harriet hasn't brought up the matter in weeks! I doubt she will make the connection."

Harriet frowned and decided that now might be a good moment to break in. Taking a few steps back from the door, she stomped loudly into the kitchen. Her parents, she noted, looked a bit too casual. What were they keeping from her?

"Tea?" Harriet's mum offered. Harriet nodded her consent and cheerfully hopped up on a stool. She looked critically at the food being prepared for dinner.

"Isn't that a lot of food?" Harriet asked. Lily looked up from pouring sugar into the tea.

"It is," she laughed, "but remember, Sirius and Remus are coming. And a few friends of Remus have been invited as well."

"Who?" Harriet asked, bewildered. Remus was really nice, so it was no surprise to her that he had friends, but she hadn't heard of any save Sirius and her dad until just now.

"Actually," James explained, letting Harriet sip her still hot tea, "it's his boss and his boss's wife who will be joining us. They are very old and don't have any family, so we thought they might like some company over the holidays."

Harriet nodded understandingly.

"Have you finished unpacking, love?"

"Yea," Harriet assured, "Isaura is upstairs taking a nap."

"Hogwarts life too busy for her?" her father laughed. Harriet shrugged.

"She spent a lot of time with Hagrid. He liked her a lot." She snorted. "I will never understand Hagrid's love of dangerous animals."

"Your mother and I meant to talk to you about that," her father began slowly. Harriet grimaced. "We understand your curiosity, Harriet, but you can't continue to poke around the castle. It can be dangerous." He didn't call her Prongslette, Harriet noted, so she knew he was serious. She nodded fervently.

"I know," she said quickly. "I didn't go looking for the dog, though, I promise!"

"So how did you manage to stumble upon it then?" her mother posed. Harriet shifted uncomfortably and, for the first time that Harriet's parents had seen, she actually looked a bit guilty.

"It was an accident," she said carefully, "just a misunderstanding between Malfoy and me."

"Malfoy and I," corrected her mother idly.

"Not you," Harriet denied, "me." Her mum gave her a look and she smiled sheepishly. It had been too hard to resist.

"Don't sass your mother," her mother teased. Harriet made her eyes wide and innocent, resisting the urge to laugh.

"I could never sass you, mum," Harriet promised, making her father laugh out loud. While they laughed and joked, Harriet thanked her luck stars that she had managed to draw their attention away from her (almost) midnight duel with Malfoy.

It was a little bit later when Remus and Sirius finally showed up. Sirius was the one who showed up first, sweeping her into a hug so tight that, for the second time that day, she actually felt herself choking.

"Sirius!" she gasped. He laughed and set her down, as if her dying from lack of oxygen was something amusing to him. She glared at him.

"I missed you, Prongslette," he smiled, apparently assuming that she wasn't really angry with him. He was right, since when her glare softened and she laughed, going in for another (less tight) hug.

"I missed you, too, Sirius," she told him meaningfully.

"What? No hug for me?" a voice demanded. Harriet looked and realized that Remus had just entered the kitchen. She threw herself at him.

"Remus," she exclaimed. He, like Sirius, laughed and gave her a large hug. It felt good to be back home, she decided, even if she loved Hogwarts. "Are your bosses coming soon, Uncle Moony?"

"Yes," he assured her, letting her go.

"Why don't you go set the table before they get here, love?" her mum suggested. Harriet nodded, finally glad to have something to do while she waited. She threw a table cloth over the table and set up the plates and cups. She was just putting the silverware down when she heard some voices from the living room: Remus's bosses had arrived.

"Harriet?" Harriet looked at the doorway, where Remus was leading two of the oldest people she had ever seen into the dining room.

She put the silverware down almost immediately, moving to pull two chairs out for them. The old man gave her a soft smile.

"Nicolas," Remus introduced, "Perenelle, this is Harriet, Lily and James's daughter. Harriet, these are the people who own the bookstore where I work, Nicolas and Perenelle Flamel."

It took all of Harriet's not-so-considerable experience to not show how she was feeling back then. I guess I know what mum and dad were hiding from me, she realized, as she shook the hand of the person she and her friends had been looking for for weeks, now.

"It's a pleasure to meet you," Harriet told them, trying not to sound too giddy. Now, she rationalized, all she needed to do is find out how they know Dumbledore and enough about them to give Hermione something to go on in the library. "Let me finish setting up the table."

They both smiled politely as Harriet bustled about. Remus and Sirius had taken their seats, while Harriet's father helped his wife in the kitchen. Harriet had just sat down when they brought dinner out. Harriet felt her stomach clench in anticipation. As good as Hogwarts's food was, nothing beat her mum's cooking.

Conversation stalled for a bit as everybody enjoyed the food. It was Mr. Flamel who finally broke it.

"Well, Lily," he told her, his voice incredibly raspy but still undeniably cheerful, "I must say that Remus was not exaggerating about your cooking. The food is remarkable."

"Thank-you," Harriet's mum said, looking very pleased. Harriet couldn't help but nod in fervent agreement.

"I really missed your cooking, mum," she admitted. Mrs. Flamel examined Harriet curiously.

"Remus said it was your first year at Hogwarts, dear?"

"Yes, Mrs. Flamel," Harriet said politely. Mr. Flamel smiled at her.

"And how are you liking it?" Harriet couldn't stop the grin that overtook her face.

"Its fantastic!" she beamed. Mr. Flamel chuckled appreciatively.

"I can imagine," he agreed. "Especially with Albus as headmaster." Harriet saw an opportunity and took it. Making herself look as innocent as possible, she asked, "You know Professor Dumbledore?"

"Oh yes," said Mr. Flamel, taking a moment to lift a shaking hand to wipe his mouth with a napkin. "He was alchemy partner for quite some time. I've known him since he was very young."

"Dumbledore was young?" Harriet had really meant to ask what Mr. Flamel was doing owning a bookstore if he was an alchemist, but for some reason, she was unable to stop herself from asking that. It was such an odd image. Harriet's parents both laughed and Sirius, who had been taking a sip of wine, almost choked. Mr. Flamel just smiled.

"Yes, well, this was a very long time ago," he explained. He grabbed his wife's hand. "I've long since retired. Perenelle and I much more content with our bookstore." Harriet smiled, as he had also answered her second question.

"Too much action involved in alchemy," Mr. Flamel added with a wink. Harriet giggled and conversation moved onto slightly more neutral topics.

It was very late when the Flamels left, with Remus escorting them to their home. Sirius stayed behind for a bit, just joking with Harriet's dad and making her laugh, but, eventually, he left as well. Harriet was finally told by her parents to head to bed.

She changed and made herself comfortable under the covers. She didn't go to sleep right away, however. She stayed up, staring at her ceiling, head swimming with what she had figured out. Granted, it wasn't much, but the knowledge that Nicolas Flamel was an alchemist who had worked with Dumbledore would give Hermione plenty to go on when she began looking in the library-

Hermione! Ron! She sat up straight. She had forgotten to tell them what she knew. She chewed on the inside of her cheek and eyed

the door leading to the hallway. It was well past her bedtime, but she honestly didn't know if she had the self-control needed to wait until tomorrow to tell her friends. Nor did she want them to get mad because she hadn't told them right away.

She crept carefully from bed, doing her best not to wake up Isaura, and opened up her trunk, rummaging around until she found her mirror. Laying back down in bed, she held it up to her face.

"Hermione?" she hissed as loudly as she dared, "Ron? Are you there?"

She heard some rustling on the other side of the mirror. Ron's face appeared first, slightly wrinkled from sleeping. He looked exceptionally drowsy. He scowled.

"Harriet? What are you thinking? I was sleeping?"

"So was I!" it was Hermione who appeared now, rubbing the sleep out her eyes. She also looked very annoyed. Harriet gave them an apologetic smile.

"I know," she whispered, keeping an ear toward the hallways in case either of her parents thought to check on her. "but you won't believe who we had over today for dinner!"

Judging by Hermione's and Ron's blank expression, they had no clue. "Nicolas Flamel and his wife!"

"What?"

"Are you serious?"

Hermione and Ron forgot to keep their voices down. Harriet mentally cursed her bad luck as she saw the hall light turn on and heard footsteps in the hall. Ignoring her friends protests and calls for more information, she stuffed her mirror underneath her bed. She pulled her covers tight around her and closed her eyes just before her bedroom door cracked open.

"Harriet?" her father's voice asked. Harriet made sure not to move.



"I told you she wasn't awake, James," her mother tutted. Harriet heard her move closer to the bed and felt her stroke her hair a few seconds later. She leant into it a bit, making her mother chuckle.

"I thought I heard something," her father protested, before admitting, "I guess I was wrong."

"Mhm," laughed her mother softly, placing a kiss on Harriet's head. Harriet heard more soft footfalls followed by the door closing. The lights in the hall went off. Harriet waited another moment before she pulled the mirror out.

"Sorry," she muttered to her impatient friends, "my parents came in."

"I really don't like all this secrecy," Hermione fretted. Harriet sighed and shifted around a bit on her bed.

"Neither do I," she admitted. "But something is going on at Hogwarts and I am determined to find out what it is!" She hissed. "Now, do you want to hear about Nicolas Flamel's visit, or not?"

Her friends listened raptly as she explained the visit and what Flamel had let slip to her over the course of the dinner.

"So Flamel was an alchemist?" surmised Ron. "And he gave it up to own a bookstore?"

"No wonder we haven't been able to find anything," sighed an exasperated Hermione. "We've been looking in the wrong section all this time! If Flamel worked with Dumbledore many many years ago, I should be able to figure out around what time that happened," she was muttering to herself at this point, "and then examine his other achievements and deduce which is the most probably for Dumbledore to be protecting."

"You do that, Hermione," Ron told her, letting out a huge yawn. "I'm going to bed."

Harriet's own yawn followed. "Yea," she agreed, "its late. I'm sorry for waking you guys up. I just thought you might want to know. I didn't want you to get mad because I didn't tell you right away-

"Harriet," Harriet got the feeling that Hermione would have sounded more exasperated had she not been so tired, "we aren't going to get mad at you if you don't tell us a piece of news right away. You can wait until its convenient for you."

"And us, mate," Ron said sleepily. "Like, not at three in the morning."

"I'll let you guys get to bed, then," Harriet said softly. "Good-night."

"Good-night, Harriet."

"Night, mate." The mirrors went dark and Harriet was left alone in her room.

"Love you guys," she whispered, before putting the mirror back under her bed and finally drifting off to sleep.

Her dreams were odd: she was playing in the yard with her family and Ron and Hermione. Slowly they faded away until she was rolling around the floor with Padfoot. He shifted, though, into Fluffy, who advanced at her with his teeth bared. She tried to run away, but something had wrapped around her legs. Quirrel's turban was constricting her legs, moving upwards, until it was completely smothering her.

Harriet jerked awake and took a few deep breaths before falling back asleep. When she woke up the next morning, she couldn't remember any of it.

Potter Manor-Christmas Day, 1991

Harriet had been in the middle of a surprisingly deep sleep when she felt something wet on her face. She tried swatting it away, but it didn't work. It almost felt as though it were raining, or maybe if something was licking her-

"Sirius!" she cried, sitting up and shoving him off of her. She managed to find her glasses and put them on. She glared crossly at him, annoyed. He just continued to sit on her bed, his tail wagging excitedly. "Its early," she grumbled, "what are you even doing up?"

He didn't say anything (obviously he couldn't in his dog form), but grabbed the wrist of her pajamas and pulled hard. Getting the hint,

she climbed out of bed, shivering a bit when she felt the cold floor hit her bare feet. She stopped along the way to get Isaura, who was also displeased at being woken up so early, and followed Sirius downstairs. Because she was going much slower than he was, he disappeared around the corner before she even made the bottom of the stairs.

When she made it into the living room, she found that he had changed back into his human form and that he was waiting for her with her parents and Remus. Harriet's eyes widened as she took in the sight: underneath their large Christmas tree was the largest pile of presents Harriet had ever seen. More than Dudley had ever dreamed of.

"Are you just going to stand there?" laughed Sirius. "Or are going to open your presents?"

"I have presents?" Harriet asked, wide-eyed. James frowned.

"What were you expecting? Turnips?"

Harriet didn't say anything, simply sitting down in daze on the floor next to the tree. If she had thought her birthday was full of presents, it had nothing on Christmas. She lost count of the presents from her parents, Sirius, and even Remus, but she got gifts from other people, too.

Hagrid gave her a small flute. When she blew on it, it sounded like an owl. Snape, in an obvious attempt to keep her from getting into any more meetings with angry trolls, got her a book called Looking Before You Leap: Thinking Through Hair-Brained Schemes Before Actually Going Through With Them. The author, Gabriel Temerarious, had died in a tragic cliff-diving accident, leaving his wife to publish his book.

"I thought Slytherins were supposed to be subtle," she asked her mum, referring to Uncle Sev's rather obvious motives behind his gift. Her mum just laughed.

Another surprising gift was from the Dursleys'. Harriet took the gift, shocked that they had bothered to get her anything. Apparently her little "accident" the last time she had seen them had scared them.

"A fifty-pence piece?" Remus asked skeptically. Sirius raised an eyebrow as Harriet snorted.

"That was generous of them," she said dryly. She held it in her hand for a second, not really sure what she should do with it, before adding it to the rest of her presents. "I'll give it to Ron," she shrugged, remembering his wide-eyed look at some of the Muggle things she had shown him. "I'm sure he'll get a kick out of it."

Speaking of the Weasleys, Molly Weasley had given Harriet a large box of homemade fudge, which Harriet tasted and found to be very good. She also received a homemade, emerald green sweater. Slipping it on, she smiled, as it was soft and warm and just the right size for her.

Harriet wasn't the only one who received presents, though. Harriet loved watching her family open their presents almost as much as she loved opening her own. Harriet's favorite moment was when her father opened up Sirius's present. He opened the small box and it released a cloud of black powder. When it cleared, his entire face was covered in feather-spitting boils.

He stood shocked for a moment, not really sure what to do, while everybody else laughed and Lily made sure to snap a picture. After a few seconds, her father got up and charged after Sirius, chasing him around the living room. Remus, wanting to join in on the fun, stuck his foot out in order to trip his friend, but it backfired on him. Sirius tripped and fell on Remus, with James landing on top of him.

The three of them toppled over the armchair Remus was sitting on and landed in a tangled and swearing heap on the floor. Harriet's mum normally would have chewed them out for using foul language in front of Harriet, but she was also laughing too hard to talk.

Things finally settled down a bit after that. At least, until Sirius suggested that they all go outside after lunch and have a snowball fight. Uncle Severus, who had arrived just in time for his suggestion, was unwillingly dragged in on it.

Everybody put on their warmest clothes and trekked outside, ready to fight. The teams ended up being the Marauders versus Harriet, Lily and Uncle Severus. While the former team relied heavily on simply pummeling their opponents with snow, Lily and Harriet and

Snape relied a bit more on stealth and strategy, thus winning the hours-long match.

Sirius and Harriet's father entered the house grumbling and annoyed, but when they smelled Harriet's mum's food a little while later, they instantly forgot about all their anger. Dinner was fantastic: A fat, roast turkey; mountains of roast and boiled potatoes; platters of chipolatas; tureens of buttered peas, silver boats of thick, rich gravy and cranberry sauce.

As everybody laughed as Remus described a particularly amusing prank pulled by he and his friends in their Hogwarts days over Christmas break, Harriet found herself hard-pressed to stop smiling.

Her Christmases with the Dursleys were never exactly fun (her favorite present had been a tin of dog-biscuits from her Aunt Marge) and she had spent many nights sitting under the Christmas tree, just watching the light twinkle and wishing that one day she would have a better Christmas.

But not even in her wildest dreams had she imagined that Christmas with her real family would be this great.

Harriet Potter, Hogwarts- January 2, 1991

Harriet had arrived at Hogwarts the day before term started, along with most of the other students. Hermione was very eager to begin looking for Nicolas Flamel. Within minutes of entering the library, Hermione found the right book.

"I don't know why I didn't think of this before," she complained to Ron and Harriet as she pulled a particularly thick book from a shelf. She led them to a table, where she began to flip through it. "I checked this out a few weeks ago for a bit of light reading!"

Ron eyed the book skeptically. "That's light?" Hermione scowled, but kept flipping.

"Here it is!" she said triumphantly. Ron and Harriet crowded around for a closer look. "Nicolas Flamel is the only known maker of the Philosopher's stone!" Ron and Harriet exchanged confused glances, letting out a simultaneous, "Huh?"

"Don't you two read?" Hermione asked tartly. Ron went to give a retort, but Harriet quickly shushed them both. Madame Pince was giving them both shrewd looks over her desk. When she finally looked away, Hermione said, "Look here!"

She read: "The ancient study of alchemy is concerned with making the Philosopher's Stone, a legendary substance with astonishing powers. The stone will transform any metal into pure gold. It also produces the Elixir of Life, which will make the drinker immortal.

There have been many reports of the Philosopher's Stone over the centuries, but the only Stone currently in existence belongs to Mr. Nicolas Flamel, the noted alchemist and opera lover. Mr. Flamel, who celebrated his six hundred and sixty-fifth birthday last year, enjoys a quiet life running a used book store, with his wife, Perenelle (six hundred and fifty-eight)."

"That explains everything!" said Harriet, just a little too loudly. Madame Pince snapped.

"Alright, alright!" she hissed, taking their book from them. "You three have been loud enough! I want you out of my library right now, or five points will be taken from Gryffindor!" Harriet, Ron, and Hermione didn't need any more motivation. They darted out of there as fast as they could and headed for the common room.

"See?" said Hermione, as they walked. "The dog must be guarding Flamel's Philosopher's Stone! I bet he asked Dumbledore to keep it safe for him, because they're friends and he knew someone was after it, that's why he wanted the Stone moved out of Gringotts!"

"The question is," posed Harriet, "who is trying to steal it?"

"Are you serious?" demanded Ron. "I'll tell ya' who! Its Snape. I bet that greasy-old bat would love to get his hands on the Stone!"

"It isn't Snape," said Harriet tartly. "Trust me."

"He tried to jinx you!"

"He let the troll in the bathroom!"

Harriet cut off her friend's protests with a firm shake of her head. They quieted. The three entered the Great Hall and took their seats, waiting for Harriet to say something.

"Somebody else here is trying to get at the Stone," she said surely. "I don't know what Snape's been trying to do, but, if anything, he's trying to protect the Stone."

"You think?" Ron asked, trying not to sound as doubtful of his friend as he really was. It didn't work and Harriet laughed, then shrugged. She framed her next words carefully.

"Dumbledore trusts Snape," Harriet said carefully. "What if, when Snape went to look for the three-headed dog that night, he wasn't looking for the Stone-"

"But for the actual thief!" said Hermione excited. Her smile darkened. "But Harriet, he tried to jinx you! Remember? At Quidditch. I saw him muttering words under his breath and not blinking because you need to maintain eye contact for jinxes!"

Ron looked as though he had come to realization, "Don't you need to maintain eye contact for counter jinxes, too?"

"Of course," wailed Hermione, obviously disappointed with herself for not making the connection. "How did I not see that before?" Ron awkwardly patted her on the back, not really sure how to comfort her.

"So we have two very different theories," said Hermione, once she had calmed herself down. "Which is right?"

"There isn't really any way to tell," Harriet grimaced. "So, for now, I guess we just wait and see."

Harriet Potter Hogwarts-February 13, 1991

They didn't have to wait long. It was morning of Gryffindor's next Quidditch game. Nerves were high, since, if Gryffindor won this game against Hufflepuff, they would overtake Slytherin in the lead for the House Cup in the first time in seven years.

Both Ron and Hermione were worried because Snape was refereeing, but Harriet honestly didn't know what to tell them to calm

them down. They had not been as open to Harriet's "Snape is trying to save the Stone" theory as she had first believed.

"I'm going to play," she had told Ron and Hermione. "If I don't, all the Slytherins will think I'm just too scared to face Snape. I'll show them... it'll really wipe the smiles off their faces if we win."

"Just as long as we're not wiping you off the field," said Hermione.

Harriet knew, when they wished her a good luck outside the locker rooms the next afternoon, that Ron and Hermione were wondering whether they would ever see her alive again.

Ron and Hermione quickly found a place in the stands next to Neville, who couldn't understand why they looked so grim and worried, or why they had both brought their wands to the match.

Little did Harriet know that Ron and Hermione had been secretly practicing the Leg-Locker Curse. They'd gotten the idea from Malfoy using it on Neville, and were ready to use it on Snape if he showed any sign of wanting to hurt Harriet.

"Now, don't forget, it's Locomotor Mortis," Hermione muttered as Ron slipped his wand up his sleeve.

"I know," Ron snapped. "Don't nag."

Back in the locker room, Wood had taken Harriet aside.

"Don't want to pressure you, Potter, but if we ever need an early capture of the Snitch it's now. Finish the game before Snape can favor Hufflepuff too much."

"The whole school's out there!" said Fred Weasley, peering out of the door. "Even — blimey — Dumbledore's come to watch!"

Harriet's heart did a somersault.

"Dumbledore?" she said, dashing to the door to make sure. Fred was right. There was no mistaking that silver beard.



Ron and Hermione had noticed Dumbledore, too. They were wondering if that was why Snape was looking so angry: because there was no way he could hurt Harriet with Dumbledore near by.

"I've never seen Snape look so mean," Ron told Hermione. "Look — they're off. Ouch!"

Someone had poked Ron in the back of the head. It was Malfoy.

"Oh, sorry, Weasley, didn't see you there."

Malfoy grinned broadly at Crabbe and Goyle.

"Wonder how long Potter's going to stay on her broom this time? Anyone want a bet? What about you, Weasley?"

Ron didn't answer; Snape had just awarded Hufflepuff a penalty because George Weasley had hit a Bludger at him.

Hermione, who had all her fingers crossed in her lap, was squinting fixedly at Harriet, who was circling the game like a hawk, looking for the Snitch.

"You know how I think they choose people for the Gryffindor team?" said Malfoy loudly a few minutes later, as Snape awarded Hufflepuff another penalty for no reason at all. "It's people they feel sorry for. See, there's Potter, who's living with a bunch'a lowlife scum, then there's the Weasleys, who've got no money — you should be on the team, Longbottom, you've got no brains."

Neville went bright red but turned in his seat to face Malfoy.

"I'm worth twelve of you, Malfoy," he stammered.

Malfoy, Crabbe, and Goyle howled with laughter, but Ron, still not daring to take his eyes from the game, said, "You tell him, Neville."

"Longbottom, if brains were gold you'd be poorer than Weasley, and that's saying something."

Ron's nerves were already stretched to the breaking point with anxiety about Harriet.

"I'm warning you, Malfoy — one more word—"

"Ron!" said Hermione suddenly, "Harriet —"

"What? Where?"

Harriet had suddenly gone into a spectacular dive, which drew gasps and cheers from the crowd. Hermione stood up, her crossed fingers in her mouth, as Harriet streaked toward the ground like a bullet.

"You're in luck, Weasley, Potter's obviously spotted some money on the ground!" said Malfoy.

Ron snapped. Before Malfoy knew what was happening, Ron was on top of him, wrestling him to the ground.

Neville hesitated, then clambered over the back of his seat to help.

"Come on, Harriet!" Hermione screamed, leaping onto her seat to watch as Harriet sped straight at Snape — she didn't even notice Malfoy and Ron rolling around under her seat, or the scuffles and yelps coming from the whirl of fists that was Neville, Crabbe, and Goyle.

Up in the air, Snape turned on his broomstick just in time to see something scarlet shoot past him, missing him by inches — the next second, Harriet had pulled out of the dive, her arm raised in triumph, the Snitch clasped in her hand.

The stands erupted; it had to be a record, no one could ever remember the Snitch being caught so quickly.

"Ron! Ron! Where are you? The game's over! Harriet's won! We've won! Gryffindor is in the lead!" shrieked Hermione, dancing up and down on her seat and hugging Parvati Patil in the row in front.

Harriet jumped off her broom, a foot from the ground. She couldn't believe it. She'd done it — the game was over; it had barely lasted five minutes. As Gryffindors came spilling onto the field, she saw Snape land nearby, white-faced and tight-lipped — then Harriet felt a hand on her shoulder and looked up into Dumbledore's smiling face.

"Well done," said Dumbledore quietly, so that only Harriet could hear. "Nice to see you haven't been brooding about that mirror... been keeping busy... excellent..."

Snape spat bitterly on the ground.

Harriet left the locker room alone some time later, to take her Nimbus Two Thousand back to the broomshed. She couldn't ever remember feeling happier. She'd really done something to be proud of now – no one could say she was just a famous name any more.

The evening air had never smelled so sweet. She walked over the damp grass, reliving the last hour in her head, which was a happy blur: Gryffindors running to lift her onto their shoulders; Ron and Hermione in the distance, jumping up and down, Ron cheering through a heavy nosebleed.

Harriet had reached the shed. She leaned against the wooden door and looked up at Hogwarts, with its windows glowing red in the setting sun. Gryffindor in the lead. She'd done it, she hoped that Uncle Severus wasn't too upset...

And speaking of Snape...

A hooded figure came swiftly down the front steps of the castle. Clearly not wanting to be seen, it walked as fast as possible toward the forbidden forest. Harriet's victory faded from her mind as she watched. She recognized the figure's prowling walk. Snape, sneaking into the forest while everyone else was at dinner — what was going on?

Harriet jumped back on her Nimbus Two Thousand and took off. Gliding silently over the castle she saw Snape enter the forest at a run. She followed.

The trees were so thick she couldn't see where Snape had gone. She flew in circles, lower and lower, brushing the top branches of trees until she heard voices. She glided toward them and landed noiselessly in a towering beech tree.

She climbed carefully along one of the branches, holding tight to his broomstick, trying to see through the leaves.

Below, in a shadowy clearing, stood Snape, but he wasn't alone. Quirrell was there, too. Harriet couldn't make out the look on his face, but he was stuttering worse than ever. Harriet strained to catch what they were saying.

"... d-don't know why you wanted t-t-to meet here of all p-places, Severus..."

"Oh, I thought we'd keep this private," said Snape, his voice icy.

"Students aren't supposed to know about the Philosopher's Stone, after all."

Harry leaned forward. Quirrell was mumbling something. Snape interrupted him.

"Have you found out how to get past that beast of Hagrid's yet?"

"B-b-but Severus, I —"

"You don't want me as your enemy, Quirrell," said Snape, taking a step toward him.

"I-I don't know what you—"

"You know perfectly well what I mean."

An owl hooted loudly, and Harriet nearly fell out of the tree. She steadied herself in time to hear Snape say, "— your little bit of hocus-pocus. I'm waiting."

"B-but I d-d-don't —"

"Very well," Snape cut in. "We'll have another little chat soon, when you've had time to think things over and decided where your loyalties lie."

He threw his cloak over his head and strode out of the clearing. It was almost dark now, but Harriet could see Quirrell, standing quite still as though he was petrified.

"Harriet, where have you been?" Hermione squeaked.

"We won! You won! We won!" shouted Ron, thumping Harriet on the back. "And I gave Malfoy a black eye, and Neville tried to take on Crabbe and Goyle single-handed! He's still out cold but Madam Pomfrey says he'll be all right! Talk about showing Slytherin! Everyone's waiting for you in the common room, we're having a party, Fred and George stole some cakes and stuff from the kitchens."

"Never mind that now," said Harriet breathlessly. "Let's find an empty room, you wait 'til you hear this..."

She made sure Peeves wasn't inside before shutting the door behind them, then he told them what he'd seen and heard.

"So we were right, it is the Philosopher's Stone, and Snape's trying to force Quirrell to help him get it. He asked if he knew how to get past Fluffy — and he said something about Quirrell's 'hocus pocus' — I reckon there are other things guarding the stone apart from Fluffy, loads of enchantments, probably, and Quirrell would have done some anti-Dark Arts spell that Snape needs to break through —" Ron muttered to himself after Harriet had finished her story.

"Or," Harriet emphasized, "Quirrel is trying to steal the Stone and Snape is trying to stop him!" The looks that both Ron and Hermione gave her showed how disbelieving they were. And she couldn't blame them: she would be the same way if she were in their position.

"You think s-s-stuttering P-P-rofessor Q-Qu-Quirrel is trying to steal the Stone?" Hermione asked, in a tone that clearly stated she was worried for her friend's mental health. "And you think that Snape—"

"—the meanest, darkest, scariest teacher in the whole school—" interjected Ron.

"—is trying to protect it?" Harriet opened her mouth to form an argument, but there honestly wasn't much she could say. She knew that everybody at the school had to believe that Snape hated her, but she hadn't realized how difficult it would be keeping her secret from her friends. Then again, she hadn't really imagined she would have gotten friends as good as Ron and Hermione.

"I don't get you, mate," Ron sighed. "Snape spends all his time in class belittling you and insulting you, but here you are defending him!"

"I'm not saying he's not a git," Harriet said quickly, "but I don't think we should assume that he's guilty just because we hate him and because he's mean. Besides, Snape is a Slytherin, right?" Harriet asked.

"Right," Ron and Hermione chorused.

"Well, they are supposed to be cunning aren't they?" Harriet asked again. When Ron and Hermione agreed, Harriet continued, "If Snape really was trying to steal the Stone, don't you think that he would try to be a little less obvious about it?"

"That's true," Hermione admitted. "So you think Quirrel's stutter is just a front?" Harriet frowned.

"I don't know," Harriet frowned. "Maybe, maybe not."

"We've been too focused on Snape to pay any attention to Quirrel," Ron grouched. He nodded firmly. "Alright, Operation The Man Underneath the Turban is a go!"

Both Harriet and Hermione gaped at him.

"What?" he asked them, turning bright red. "My dad made us watch this movie once called The Man Behind that Mask? I thought it was appropriate."

"I like it," Hermione encouraged.

"Alright," Harriet closed, "Tomorrow, we begin Operation The Man Underneath the Turban."

AN: Okay, this was a pretty fast update, but I figured I owed y'all one since I only updated once over break. That in mind, I'll probably go back to my old schedule now. I'll update about once a week or ever two weeks, depending on the workload at my school.

I got a decent amount of reviews telling me to keep posting, so I will. Thanks for the positive responses to this story. They make me smile, so keep on reviewing.

tinyrose65

Hogwarts-April 19, 1992

Weeks passed, but there was no information on Quirrel. He seemed to grow paler over time, but he hadn't done anything particularly evil (save one very nasty pop-quiz, but Hermione said that this didn't count, much to Harriet's and Ron's chagrin).

It was difficult, though, to find time to watch Quirrel with the work piled on by their teachers. Exams were still several months away, but it didn't seem the teachers (or Hermione, for that matter) realized it with all the extra homework.

Harriet sighed as she climbed the stairs to her dorm. She, Ron, and Hermione were going to work on their Transfiguration essays, but she had left her book in her room. Opening the door, she found herself pleasantly surprised since neither Lavender or Parvati (whose giggling was annoying her more and more each day) were there.

"Where is that book?" she muttered to herself as she sifted through the paper and text-books in her book bag. "There you are," she said triumphantly, lifting the heavy text from its place towards the bottom. She went to leave, but a small hiss stopped her.

"Isaura!" she greeted, realizing that her snake had been waiting patiently for her on one of her bed posts. "I almost didn't...see..you..." she trailed off, a vague plan beginning to form in her head, assuming that Isaura was okay with it.

"Isaura," she said quickly, not giving her friend time to respond, "Are you doing anything particularly important?"

"I'm a sssnake, pequinina," she hissed, amused, but sounding a bit more agitated than normal. Harriet couldn't help but agree that it was a rather stupid question. "But listen, Pequinina, I wasss jusst down at the Big Man's hut, and he needss-"

"Can you do me a favor?" Harriet asked, cutting Isaura off. Admittedly, it was rather rude, and Harriet felt guilty after the fact, but for now she was too excited. "Ron, Hermione, and I have been trying to get information on Quirrel, but we haven't had much time. Could you follow him around and tell me what you find?"



Isaura hissed, not happy about being cut off, but unable to deny the urgency in her mistress's voice, hissed "Finee, rather snappishly, before slithering from the bed rather rapidly, not bothering to say goodbye, and heading for the door.

"Harriet?" Hermione asked, walking into the room. "Whats taking you so long?" Hermione smiled when she saw Isaura, whom she had come to like in the past few months. "Hello, Isaura."

Isaura just snapped and hissed angrily as she slunk through the door. Hermione frowned and looked at Harriet worried. "Did I do something to upset her? She seems annoyed."

Harriet shook her head absentmindedly. Hermione was right, Isaura had been very agitated when Harriet found her, even before she had rudely cut her off. What had she been trying to say earlier? Harriet's eyes widened and she looked at Hermione. Hermione frowned, worried, and asked, "Is everything alright?"

"I hope so," Harriet said slowly, swallowing. "Hermione, go get Ron. We need to see Hagrid."

Hermione nodded curtly, trusting her friend enough to know that Harriet wouldn't be asking them to abandon their essay, which was due tomorrow, for something that wasn't important. Harriet watched her friend leave then let out a puff of air. She hoped she wasn't wrong. She would feel immensely guilty if she dragged her friends across Hogwarts grounds for no reason at all.

They met up at the downstairs, then set off. They tried to understand why Harriet thought Hagrid was in trouble, but she couldn't really tell them anything without letting slip the fact that she was a Parselmouth, something that she wasn't sure she wanted to do just yet. What if they rejected her because of it? She remembered Moony mentioning some similar apprehensions during his school years regarding his friends and his lycanthropy, so she made a mental note to ask about it the next time she saw him.

"I told you, Isaura seemed really testy when she came back from Hagrid's hut. I'm worried that he is in trouble," she sighed, trying to not lie to them, while not trying simultaneously to lie to them. It was rather difficult to do.

"Yea," Ron said, "fine. But how did you know that Isaura had just come from Hagrid's-"

"Hagrid!" Harriet cut him off (she was doing that a lot lately) and began running quickly to his house, then banging loudly on the door. "Hagrid are you in there?" Harriet, Ron, and Hermione heard a loud bang coming from inside, followed by a muffled curse, and grew even more frantic than before.

"Hagrid!"

"Hagrid are you alright?"

"Open up, Hagrid!"

They pounded hard on the door. All three jumped backwards when their hands met cloth instead of wood. They had been hitting Hagrid, who was wearing a very odd outfit.

"Hagrid," Ron asked, wrinkling his nose, "Why are you wearing a cooking apron and oven mitts?"

"Er, no real reason," he coughed trying to use his bulky frame to block their view of the door. Harriet narrowed her eyes suspiciously. "Listen, now ain't a good time. Come back later, yeh hear?"

"Hagrid, Isaura just came to me and she seemed really upset." Harriet said, making her eyes wide, a trick she had learned from her short time with her parents. "We just wanted to make sure everything is alright," she told him, sniffing slightly for good measure.

"Oh, alright," he huffed, "get in 'ere." Ignoring the awestruck expressions of both Ron and Hermione, Harriet hopped over the threshold. After they had followed, Hagrid closed the door firmly shut behind him.

"Uh, Hagrid," coughed Hermione, "maybe you should open a window or something. Its very stuffy in here." Indeed, the hut was filled with smoke and soot, making it hard to breath, or even see.

"I was gettin' chilly," Hagrid said evasively. Ron raised an eyebrow.

"In this weather?" he asked skeptically. Indeed, it was very warm outside and the sun was shining brightly. Hagrid shifted.

"I think I might be coming down with something," he muttered, giving a feeble cough. "You three should probably get out'a here 'afore you come down with I got!"

"Hang on, Hagrid," Hermione protested, moving to avoid one of Hagrid's hands, which were attempting to assure them out, knocking over a pan in the process. "We came to ask you about what other enchantments were guarding the Stone besides Fluffy!"

Hagrid drew in a deep breath, almost choking on the smoke. "Found out about that, did'ya?" He wheezed. He chuckled. "Should'a known yeh would," he nodded crossly, "too dang nosey, all three of yeh!"

"Well, I can't tell yeh," he said. "Number one, I don' know meself. Number two, yeh know too much already, so I wouldn' tell yeh if I could. That Stone's here fer a good reason. It was almost stolen outta Gringotts — I s'ppose yeh've worked that out an' all? Beats me how yeh even know abou' Fluffy."

"Oh, come on, Hagrid, you might not want to tell us, but you do know, you know everything that goes on round here," said Hermione in a warm, flattering voice.

Hagrid's beard twitched and they could tell he was smiling. "We only wondered who had done the guarding, really." Hermione went on. "We wondered who Dumbledore had trusted enough to help him, apart from you."

Hagrid's chest swelled at these last words. Harriet and Ron beamed at Hermione.

"I think we're a bad influence on her," muttered Harriet quietly to Ron, while Hagrid was gathering his thoughts.

"Well, I don' s'pose it could hurt ter tell yeh that... let's see... he borrowed Fluffy from me... then some o' the teachers did enchantments... Professor Sprout — Professor Flitwick — Professor McGonagall —" he ticked them off on his fingers, "Professor Quirrell — an' Dumbledore himself did somethin', o' course. Hang on, I've forgotten someone. Oh yeah, Professor Snape."

"Professor Quirrel?"

"Professor Snape?"

Harriet shot both of her friends a sour look. She understood their hesitation. It had been weeks and weeks and they had found nothing at all to prove that Quirrel was the one responsible for trying to steal the stone. Hopefully, she rationalized, Isaura would bring back some evidence to show them once and for all.

"You're the only one who knows how to get past Fluffy. aren't you, Hagrid?" said Harriet anxiously. "And you wouldn't tell anyone, would you? Not even one of the teachers?"

"Not a soul knows except me an' Dumbledore," said Hagrid proudly.

"Well, that's something," Harriet mumbled to the others. "Hagrid, can we have a window open? I'm boiling."

"Can't, Harriet, sorry," said Hagrid. Harriet noticed him glance at the fire. Harriet looked at it, too.

"Hagrid — what's that?"

But she already knew what it was. In the very heart of the fire, underneath the kettle, was the biggest and blackest egg Harriet had ever seen.

"Ah," said Hagrid, fiddling nervously with his beard, "That's — er..."

"Where did you get it, Hagrid?" said Ron, crouching over the fire to get a closer look at the egg. "Its a dragon's egg! It must've cost you a fortune." Harriet took a deep breath when Ron said that it was a dragon's egg.

"Won it," said Hagrid. "Las' night. I was down in the village havin' a few drinks an' got into a game o' cards with a stranger. Think he was quite glad ter get rid of it, ter be honest."

"But what are you going to do with it when it's hatched?" said Hermione.

"Well, I've bin doin' some readin'," said Hagrid, pulling a large book from under his pillow. "Got this outta the library —Dragon Breeding for Pleasure and Profit — it's a bit outta date, o' course, but it's all in here. Keep the egg in the fire, 'cause their mothers breathe on I em, see, an' when it hatches, feed it on a bucket o' brandy mixed with chicken blood every half hour. An' see here — how ter recognize diff'rent eggs — what I got there's a Norwegian Ridgeback. They're rare, them."

"Hagrid," Harriet said doubtfully, "you live in a wooden house!" Hagrid waved away her concerns. He walked over to the fire and, using a poker, began to stoke it, humming a tuneless song while he worked.

"Now we know what Isaura was on about," Ron informed his friends after they had left the hut. "Besides that fact that Hagrid's trying to raise a Norwegian Ridgeback in house made of wood, dragons are highly illegal."

Harriet stopped short, as did Hermione. "Are you saying," Hermione asked fretfully, "that if somebody finds out about the dragon egg Hagrid could go to prison?"

Ron grimaced, "He'd have to pay a hefty fine, at the least."

"Malfoy's father is on the Board of Governors for the school," Harriet remembered suddenly. "If Draco gets a hold of this and it gets back to his father, he'll try and spin it and say that Hagrid has got the dragon really close to a bunch of kids and is putting us in danger."

"That'd definitely earn him a few years in Azkaban," Ron said, paling. Harriet sucked in a breath. She didn't know much about Azkaban, but she knew from Sirius's reactions to the place that it was awful.

"We can't let that happen!" Hermione said hysterically. Harriet wondered if she should hit her to snap her out of it, but didn't have time when Hermione threw her arms around Ron and hugged him fiercely, trying to calm herself down. Ron shot Harriet a panicked look and she had to hide her snickers as he placed a hesitant arm around her.

"We won't," Ron assured her, "we'll come up with something."

Hogwarts- April 29, 1992

Contrary to Ron's words, a week went by and none of them had any idea of what to do about the egg. In between classes, homework, additional studying and Quidditch, Harriet and her friends barely had time to sneeze, let alone figure out how to save Hagrid. Nor did they have time to follow Quirrel or Snape around. The one thing Harriet could take comfort in was the fact that Isaura had yet to report back on Quirrel, so she knew that nothing too major was going on.

One day, while eating breakfast, Hedwig delivered a small note. Harriet recognized the writing almost immediately.

It's hatching, was all the note said in Hagrid's familiar scratchy scrawl. Harriet took the note and quickly shoved it in her book bag before anybody else could see.

Ron wanted to skip Herbology so that they wouldn't miss it, but Hermione refused.

"C'mon, Hermione," he whined, annoyed. "How many times are you going to see a dragon hatch?"

"It doesn't matter," Hermione told him tartly, "if we miss class, the teachers will get suspicious!"

"Guys," Harriet hissed. Malfoy, who had been walking just a bit ahead of them, had stopped in his tracks. The three watched horrorstruck as he then walked quickly away.

"He couldn't have heard anything," Hermione said weakly. Ron nodded firmly. Harriet wasn't so sure. She didn't like the look on Malfoy's face.

During morning break, Hermione, Ron, and Harriet rushed as fast as they could down to Hagrid's hut. Hagrid greeted them, looking excited and very pleased. He beamed at them and ushered them inside. He told them that it was almost out and quickly ushered them inside.

The egg was lying on the small table. Harriet could see that, unlike the previous time they had visited, there were large cracks in it. It

was rocking back and forth and there were some funny noises in it, as though something was moving from the inside.

Hagrid nudged them closer, so they all moved to stand around it, watching it eagerly.

All at once there was a scraping noise and the egg split open. The baby dragon flopped onto the table. It wasn't exactly pretty; Harriet thought it looked like a crumpled, black umbrella. Its spiny wings were huge compared to its skinny jet body, it had a long snout with wide nostrils, the stubs of horns and bulging, orange eyes.

She couldn't imagine such a little animal doing very much damage, but then it sneezed, forcing a small stream of fire from its nose. Hagrid, who had been standing too close, had to quickly put out some stray sparks in his beard.

"Isn't he beautiful?" Hagrid said thickly, although whether that was from love or pain, Harriet couldn't tell. Hagrid reached out a hand to stroke the dragon's head, but apparently it wasn't in the mood. It gave his finger a good chomp, holding on tightly.

"Bless him, look, he knows his mommy!" said Hagrid, tears falling from his eyes as he gently tried to loosen the dragon's hold.

"Hagrid," said Hermione cautiously, watching the small creature apprehensively, as though it might suddenly decide to have a go at her, "how fast do Norwegian Ridgebacks grow, exactly?"

Hagrid shrugged and mumbled some incomprehensible answer. The trio exchanged glances. Harriet was about to ask Hagrid what he planned on doing when the dragon got larger, but she was started by Ron darting from his place and to the window, knocking over a cup in the process.

Norbert gave a frightened cry and Hagrid glared at Ron, who was looking pale-faced out the small window. "Watch it, Ron! Yeh scared 'im!"

"Never mind that!" said Ron, turning around to face them. "Someone was looking through the gap in the curtains! I think it was Malfoy!"

Harriet bolted to the door and looked out. She hadn't doubted Ron to begin with, but if what he said was true... Harriet squinted in the darkness. Even at a distance there was no mistaking him.

Malfoy had seen the dragon.

Something about the smile lurking on Malfoy's face during the next week made Harriet, Ron, and Hermione very nervous.

Hogwarts-May 8, 1992

Harriet, Ron, and Hermione did not think that it would be too difficult to convince Hagrid to get rid of Norbert, but they were wrong. They tried reason, blackmail, bribery, and plain old begging, but he wouldn't bend.

"I can't," said Hagrid, when Hermione pleaded with him to just let Norbert go. "He's too little. He'd die."

Harriet cast a skeptical eye at the dragon. It had grown much since they had last seen it and was now the size of a large dog. Fang stood huddled in the corner, watching it through weary eyes. Because of its large size and even larger appetite, Hagrid had been neglecting his gamekeeping duties, meaning that the grounds of Hogwarts were not up to their usual standards of elegance. She wondered how long it would take before Dumbledore realized that something was wrong. If he didn't already, Harriet rationalized.

"I've decided to call him Norbert," said Hagrid, looking at the dragon proudly. "He really knows me now, watch. Norbert! Norbert! Where's Mommy?"

"He's gone mental," Ron muttered into Harriet's ear. She couldn't help but agree. Hermione, however, stayed focused on the task at hand, reminding Hagrid that Norbert would soon be larger than the house, so, even if Malfoy did keep his mouth shut, it would be unlikely that he would be able to keep his secret for long.

Hagrid looked as though he was going to have to swallow a particularly disgusting potion. "But he's just a baby," he whined. Harriet's eyes lit up and she turned to Ron.

"Charlie." she said.



"You're losing it, too," said Ron. "I'm Ron, remember?"

"No — Charlie — your brother, Charlie. In Romania. Studying dragons. We could send Norbert to him. Charlie can take care of him and then put him back in the wild!"

"Brilliant!" said Hermione, beaming at the rare insight her friend had shown (not that Harriet was unintelligent, of course, but Hermione had already learned that she could be rather oblivious at times). "How about it, Hagrid?"

It took a bit more prodding, along with plenty assurances from Ron that Norbert would be well looked after, but Hagrid finally agreed. Of course, all they had to do now was get Ron's brother to agree to smuggle an illegal dragon out of Hogwarts.

"He will," Ron assured them, as they tied the note to Hedwig's leg. "He loves Hagrid as much as we do! They became really close when he was at Hogwarts, since they both liked dragons so much."

The next night found Hermione and Harriet sitting alone in the common room during dinner, alone. They were waiting for Ron, who was down at Hagrid's hut, helping him feed Norbert, who was now eating dead rats by the crate. The common room door opened and they ran up to meet him.

"Ron!" Hermione blanched at the sight of him. "You're hand! Indeed, Ron's hand was wrapped tightly in a handkerchief, which was slowly growing darker and darker with the color of blood.

"It bit me!" he scowled. "I'm not going to be able to hold a quill for a week. I tell you, that dragon's the most horrible animal I've ever met, but the way Hagrid goes on about it, you'd think it was a fluffy little bunny rabbit. When it bit me he told me off for frightening it. And when I left, he was singing it a lullaby."

There was a tap on the dark window.

"It's Hedwig!" said Harriet, hurrying to let her in. "She'll have Charlie's answer!"

The three of them put their heads together to read the note.

Dear Ron,

How are you? Thanks for the letter — I'd be glad to take the Norwegian Ridgeback, but it won't be easy getting him here. I think the best thing will be to send him over with some friends of mine who are coming to visit me next week. Trouble is, they mustn't be seen carrying an illegal dragon.

Could you get the Ridgeback up the tallest tower at midnight on Saturday? They can meet you there and take him away while it's still dark.

Send me an answer as soon as possible.

Love,

Charlie

They looked at one another.

"How are we going to get to the top of the Astronomy Tower at midnight?" wailed Hermione. "We'll be seen for sure!"

"Not if we use my invisibility cloak," Harriet said without thinking. Both Ron and Hermione gaped at her. Ron scowled accusingly.

"We've been sneaking around the castle all this time," he began angrily, "and you've got an invisibility cloak—"

"My parents told me not to misuse it!"

"Oh," retorted Ron, crossing his arms over his chest, making sure not to hurt his injured hand, "and you've been listening to everything else they've told you not to do!" Harriet's eyes flashed and Ron immediately knew that he had gone too far. He sighed and dropped his arms, holding the handkerchief firmly around his injury.

"I think they'd be okay with this," Harriet said quietly, still hurt by her friend's words. Hermione watched their interaction cautiously, not knowing what to do. "They love Hagrid, too."

"Yea," Ron said slowly, looking at Harriet cautiously, wondering if she was still angry. "I reckon they would."

Harriet gave him a small smile, which he eagerly returned. Hermione rolled her eyes. Those two, she thought affectionately. They couldn't stay angry at each other for anything!

Harriet had gone to bed that night feeling much better knowing that there was a plan in place. The next morning, though, on her way to breakfast, she thought she felt her heart fall straight through her stomach and to the floor: she could see Ron, sitting next to Hermione, struggling to eat his breakfast with one hand, his other under the table. Judging by the grim expressions on their faces, things were not good. When the three of them escaped the breakfast hall (Harriet not even caring that she hadn't eaten anything), Harriet finally saw that Ron's hand had swollen to twice its usual size.

The three debated as to whether or not they should go to Madam Pomfrey. Would she recognize a dragon bite? By the end of the afternoon, though, he had no choice. The cut had turned a nasty shade of green. It looked as if Norbert's fangs were poisonous.

Harriet and Hermione rushed up to the hospital wing at the end of the day to find Ron in a terrible state in bed. At first, they assumed that it was only his hand that was bothering, but he denied it.

"Mafloy was here early," he groaned softly.

"How did he get in?" Hermione frowned. Harriet was wondering the same thing. It had taken quite a bit of begging to get Madam Pomfrey to let them in. The only reason she had finally relented was because she knew how close the three had become in the recent months.

"He lied and fed her some nonsense about needing to borrow a book for class," Ron rolled his eyes and Harriet snickered.

"I didn't know Malfoy could read," she said, eyebrows raised to her hairline. Hermione thought this was funny, but Ron still looked worried.

"He threatened to tell Madam Pomfrey about what really bit me."

"What did you tell her it was?" Harriet asked.

"A dog bite," Ron admitted. Harriet cast his hand a doubtful look. Harriet had been bit by dogs several times in her short life, thanks to Aunt Marge and her bull dogs (in fact, biting her seemed to be the favorite hobby of Ripper, one of the stupider and larger dogs), and Ron's green hand looked nothing like a dog bite.

"I don't think he believed me," Ron said, "but she didn't say anything."

"Of course she didn't," Hermione soothed. "What was she going to do? Turn you away? And don't worry about Malfoy. This entire thing will be behind us by midnight on Saturday."

Contrary to Hermione's intention, this didn't assure Ron at all. Instead, he seemed to grow even more green (Harriet wondered if she should get him a bucket) and he looked as though the world was going to end. "Malfoy's got my book!" He wailed.

"Don't worry," Harriet said, totally flabbergasted, "I'm sure you'll get it back eventually. And you can borrow mine until then."

"No," scowled Ron, "that's not what I meant! Charlie's letter was in that book!"

Hermione and Harriet's eyes widened, realizing the implications of Malfoy's actions. He would know about Norbert. They didn't have a chance to discuss things further, though, because Madam Pomfrey shushed them out, saying that Ron was looking too pale and needed to sleep. Harriet doubted that the pallor of Ron's skin had anything to do with a lack of sleep.

"We can't change our plans now," said Harriet to Hermione as they walked the (thankfully) deserted hallway. "Who knows if we are going to have another chance to get rid of Norbert? And, at the rate he's growing, he'll be as big as that troll in a few more weeks!"

"At least we have the cloak," said Hermione, biting strongly on her lip. She gave a weak smile. "Malfoy doesn't know about that, at least."

In order to run through their plan one more time, Harriet and Hermione headed to Hagrid's hut. They weren't surprised to see Fang (Hagrid's boarhound) outside. He hadn't really taken to Norbert like his master had. Judging by his newly bandaged foot, he had good reason to keep his distance.

They tried knocking on Hagrid's door, but he didn't answer. Instead, both Harriet and Hermione received a large shock when Hagrid's head poked out the window. Judging by the banging from inside his hut, Norbert was in a very testy mood.

Harriet explained Charlie's letter as fast as she could, hoping to keep their visit short. Hagrid seemed very happy with the development, although it was rather hard to tell due to the fact that his beard had once again caught on fire. Harriet, thinking quickly, grabbed the plate of water that Hagrid had set out for Fang and flung the contents on Hagrid's face. He sputtered, thanked her, then disappeared back inside.

Harriet and Hermione left, both knowing that Saturday would not come fast enough.

When Saturday did come, however, both Harriet and Hermione were worried sick about what they had to do. Hermione in particular kept rambling about how they were sure to get expelled if they were caught. Harriet pointed out that being expelled was the least of their worries, considering how many many laws they were breaking. Suffice to say, this did not calm Hermione down in the slightest, which meant that Harriet's nerves were even more on edge due to her friend's chattering.

Hagrid was very sad to see Norbert go, and while Harriet felt a bit bad for him, she couldn't help but feel complete longing for the moment when Norbert would be gone and Harriet would never have to worry about him again. Hermione seemed to be feeling similarly, judging by her lack of compassion towards Hagrid.

"He's got lots o' rats an' some brandy fer the journey," said Hagrid in a muffled voice, as Harriet and Hermione picked up the crate that held Norbert. "An' I've packed his teddy bear in case he gets lonely."

From inside the crate came ripping noises that sounded to Harriet as though the teddy was having his head torn off.

"Bye-bye, Norbert!" Hagrid sobbed, as Harriet and Hermione covered the crate with the invisibility cloak and stepped underneath it themselves. "Mommy will never forget you!"

Harriet firmly believed that carrying Norbert back up to the castle and along the staircases and through the hallways was one of the most impossible feats ever accomplished in the history of Hogwarts. Smirking at the thought of the reactions of her father and Remus and Sirius (knowing full well all the things that they had done), she directed Hermione towards one of the several shortcuts she knew, not that it helped much.

"Nearly there!" Harriet panted as they reached the corridor beneath the tallest tower.

The sudden sound of footsteps made Harriet and Hermione stop short. Hermione gave a frightened squeak and Harriet had to suppress the urge to drop her side of the crate and slap her hand over Hermione's mouth. The invisibility cloak kept people from seeing them, but they could still be heard. Harriet could make out the outline of two different people. For a moment, she struggled to see who they were, but then a lamp flared. Professor McGonagall, in a tartan bathrobe and a hair net, had Malfoy by the ear.

"Detention!" she shouted. "And twenty points from Slytherin! Wandering around in the middle of the night, how dare you —"

"You don't understand, Professor. Harriet Potter's coming — he's got a dragon!"

"What utter rubbish! How dare you tell such lies! Come on — I shall see Professor Snape about you, Malfoy!"

The steep spiral staircase up to the top of the tower seemed the easiest thing in the world after that. Not until they'd stepped out into the cold night air did they throw off the cloak, glad to be able to breathe properly again. Hermione did a sort of jig.

"Malfoy's got detention! I could sing!"

"Don't," Harriet advised her, earning a glare for her trouble.

Chuckling about Malfoy, they waited, Norbert trying desperately to escape in his crate. After about ten minutes, Hermione nudged Harriet and pointed eagerly. Harriet could just make out four broomsticks swooping down out of the darkness.

Charlie's friends were very happy, despite the fact that what they were doing was highly illegal. They showed Harriet and Hermione the harness they'd rigged up, so they could suspend Norbert between them. They all helped buckle Norbert safely into it and then Harriet and Hermione shook hands with the others and thanked them very much.

At last, Norbert was going... going... gone.

They slipped back down the spiral staircase, their hearts as light as their hands, now that Norbert was off them. No more dragon — Malfoy in detention — what could spoil their happiness?

"Pequinina," Harriet stopped short, along with Hermione. Isaura had been slithering quietly toward them. Harriet and Hermione grinned widely, despite the fact that Isaura's expression was very grave. "I must tell you something important, pequinina! The double-speak man was crying earlier today. He sounded very anxious."

"That's not good," Harriet muttered to herself, making sure to speak quietly in English, knowing that if Quirrel was crying, something must have changed. She spoke hoping that Hermione would not hear her, but thankfully she was still on a Norbert-free induced high. "We were just-" Harriet stopped short and sucked in a deep breath.

"What?" pressed Hermione. Harriet shot her a panicked look.

"Isaura can see us!" she hissed, trying to pull Hermione along the corridor and back up to the tower. Hermione still seemed a bit perplexed.

"So?" It took her another second to realize what Harriet had already learned. "The cloak!"

They turned around to head back to the tower, but found themselves face to face with none other than Snape himself. He held his wand up to their faces, lighting up their guilty expressions. He tutted softly.

"Well, well, well," he hissed, "we are in trouble."

Snape's Office-May 9, 1992

It was past midnight and both Harriet and Hermione found themselves being lead into Snape's office. They followed, neither daring to say a word. He opened the door and they saw both McGonnagal and Draco, but they were surprised to see Neville there as well. He was pale faced and anxious.

"Harriet! Hermione!" Neville said, not caring how much trouble he was in. "What's going on? I've heard you've got a dragon-"

Harriet didn't have to worry about quieting Neville, as Snape did it for her with a deep glare. Neville gulped. Harriet turned her eyes back to Snape.

Beside her, Hermione seemed beside herself, sniffing occasionally, but Harriet's mind was racing: she had known that she was breaking the rules and that her parents would not be happy, but she assumed that if she explained everything to them, they would understand. Snape was a different story. First off, she had no idea how close he was to Hagrid. Second, even if he did understand where she was coming from, his obligation to play the role of a bad guy would dictate that he turn Hagrid in. This left her with one option.

She had to lie through her teeth. Hopefully, all of her practice with the Dursleys would pay off. Granted, Snape was much smarter than her relatives and could read her like a book, but it was worth a shot.

"Well," sneered Snape, leaning forward and clasping his hands together, "do either one of you wish to tell me what you were doing?"

Hermione opened her mouth to defend herself, but Harriet nudged her, quieting her. Harriet didn't say anything, just watching Snape, waiting to hear what he would say. If she could figure out how much he knew, she and Hermione might be able to talk their way out of the hole they had dug themselves into.

"No?" Snape quirked an eyebrow. He stood up quickly and moved to stand in front of them, his face close to their own. His eyes, as always, were like dark and endless tunnels. "They've have been



some interesting rumors floating around these halls," he whispered, "and now is the time to figure out the truth. We will stay here all night if we have to."

"With all due respect, sir," Harriet said boldly, in a tone that garnered no respect at all, "Isn't this outside of your jurisdiction? Professor McGonnagal is our Head of House." Harriet met Snape's gaze evenly. She might be able to get off on a technicality. Granted, McGonnagal wouldn't be too happy about their behavior either, but she might be a little bit more fair. Harriet snuck a glance at said Professor. She didn't look too happy.

"Trying to weasel your way out of punishment, Potter," Snape said, sounding highly amused in a twisted way. "Well, your Head of House and I have discussed that, as this seems to concern both Slytherin and Gryffindor students, we shall both handle the task of assigning punishments."

He straightened. "Since neither of you wish to divulge what has happened here this night, perhaps I should guess?"

Hermione raised her head defiantly and grabbed Harriet's hand. Harriet gave her a reassuring squeeze.

"You fed Draco Malfoy some cock-and-bull story about a dragon, trying to get him out of bed and into trouble." Snape said, speaking slowly. "Professor McGonnagal has already caught him. I suppose you think it's funny that Longbottom here heard the story and believed it, too?"

Harriet caught Neville's eye and tried to tell him without words that this wasn't true, because Neville was looking stunned and hurt. Poor, blundering Neville — Harriet knew what it must have cost him to try and find them in the dark, to warn them. Snape noticed her look and he had had plenty of practice in reading her expressions.

"Unless," he muttered, "you wish to tell me that there actually was a dragon?" Hermione sucked in a deep breath and looked to Harriet, who had never felt more conflicted in her life. If she admitted that Hagrid had a dragon, he would probably go to prison. Dumbledore might be able to protect him, but it would not be worth the risk. Neville, however, would know that Harriet and Hermione had not

been trying to trick him. If Harriet said that there was no dragon, Hagrid would be safe, but Neville would be hurt.

"Well, Potter?" he sneered. Harriet made her decision.

"There wasn't a dragon, sir," she told him. "We made it up, but we never meant-" Snape cut her off. Harriet prayed that she would have another chance to explain everything to Neville.

"I should have known," Snape sneered, speaking only to Harriet. She braced herself for whatever he was about to throw at her, reminding herself that he didn't mean it. "You're just like you're father. He and his friends used to strut about this castle as if they owned it. Its plain to see that you are just as vain and arrogant-"

"Professor Snape!" Professor McGonnagal cut off, looking aghast. Harriet was barely holding herself together. There was something different, this time, about how he had insulted her. She had seen it in his eyes. He meant it this time.

"Fifty points," Snape said curtly, "will be taken from Gryffindor house."

"Fifty," gasped Hermione. Harriet looked desperately at her Head of House. Surely McGonnagal wouldn't let Snape do that? They would lose the lead she had in won in their last Quidditch match.

"Fifty each," she breathed, through her long pointed nose. "And all four of you shall receive detention."

"I'm sorry, Professor," said Malfoy, speaking up for the first time. He looked a bit confused. "I thought you said four-"

"Yes, Mr. Malfoy," McGonnagal snapped, "that means you, too!"

"Surely," Snape said silkily, "it isn't right to punish Mr. Malfoy, when he was only the victim of a cruel-"

"I don't want to hear it," McGonnagal snapped. The glare she gave silenced even Snape. "If Mr. Malfoy was so convinced that there was dragon, he could have gone to a teacher, could he have not?" Snape glowered, knowing that she was right. "Nothing gives a student the right to be wandering the corridors at night!"

With that, they were each ushered to their respective dorms, Neville ignoring the pleas of Harriet and Hermione trying to get him to listen. Harriet and Hermione both went to sleep with heavy hearts that night.

Hogwarts-May 13, 1992

Dear Harriet,

Severus wrote to us explaining you're rather interesting adventure around the castle, love. What did we say about roaming the corridors at night? We told you it was dangerous. Granted, we understand that asking you to completely follow all of the rules at Hogwarts is unlikely and there are certain things that all students at Hogwarts do at one point or another (lord knows you're father did his fair share of rule breaking and pranking at school).

While he and Sirius applaud you on your first attempt at a prank (I'm going to look the other way for a moment), we can't help but be a bit disappointed that you had to involve Neville in your trickery.

We thought you were friends?

Regardless, we hope that you apologize to him, especially as (at least to our knowledge) he has never done anything other than be nice to you.

We love and miss you,

Your parents.

Harriet scowled at the letter and resisted the urge to chuck it into the fire of the common room. Although she had originally planned on telling her parents the truth, she had not planned on being caught by Snape. In fact, she hadn't planned on being caught by anybody. If she told her parents, though, Snape would know that she had lied to his face and he would be even more angry with her.

And he was very angry with her. She couldn't even see him in the halls without garnering some sort of biting remark or sharp insult. To make matters worse, it was only Ron and Hermione who felt bad for her. The rest of Gryffindor house, so angry with her and her friends

for losing them so many points, had taken to either completely ignoring her or verbally (and even physically, on a few occasions, which were, thankfully, more shoving rather than any physical blows) attacking her in the halls.

Fred and George even pretended that they didn't know Harriet or Hermione. That was nothing compared to Percy, though, who had greeted them the morning after their adventure with a stern lecture on "troublemaking" and "failed expectations." Hermione was left close to tears, as she had gotten on quite well with Percy, but Harriet, having received much sterner dressing downs in her life, just shrugged it off.

Ron, whose hand had finally healed, wasn't as understanding when Percy suggested that he break his friendship with the two "hooligans." Percy was unable to stop laughing for hours because of the vicious Tickling Charm Ron had cast (one of the few spells in his repertoire) and Flitwick, although obligated to give him detention for doing magic in the hall, seemed very reluctant in having to punish such excellent Charms work.

To top it all, Harriet hadn't seen hide nor hair of Isaura since their encounter in the hallway a few nights prior. She was starting to get worried, especially as she had no more information about why Quirrel had been crying.

"Hey," Harriet jumped. Ron and Hermione had both snuck up on her. Hermione had been trying to tutor Ron in History of Magic in hopes to prep him for the exam and it seemed that they had just returned back from the library.

"Hey," Harriet said, sitting up from her position on the couch. It startled her to realize that she was now alone in the common room. In fact, it was rather late. She could already see the stars. She rubbed her eyes and picked up her letter. Hermione noticed.

"Whats that?" she asked curiously. Harriet said, "A letter from my parents."

"Are the angry with you?" Ron asked quietly. Harriet grimaced and clenched the letter in her fist, rumpling it even more.

"No," she told her friends bitterly, "they are disappointed in me." Both Ron and Hermione gave their friend sympathetic glances, knowing how difficult it must be for her to displease her parents.

"Well cheer up," Ron said, "At least we've got detention with Hagrid!" Harriet raised her head and looked at him curiously.

"You've got detention?"

"For the Tickling Charm, remember?" He prodded. "I convinced Flitwick to let me have detention with you guys."

"Speaking of which," Hermione urged, trying to pull her friend from her seat, "we have to be there soon! We can't be late to detention!" Laughing at Hermione, Harriet got up off her seat and, after placing the letter back in her room, the three made their way to Hagrid's hut, speculating as to what he would have them do. When they got there, Neville was already waiting and Filch had already brought Draco outside. Filch sneered at them.

"I bet you'll think twice about breaking a school rule again, won't you, eh?" he said, leering at them. "Oh yes... hard work and pain are the best teachers if you ask me... It's just a pity they let the old punishments die out... hang you by your wrists from the ceiling for a few days, I've got the chains still in my office, keep 'em well oiled in case they're ever needed... Right, off we go, and don't think of running off, now, it'll be worse for you if you do."

"Leave 'em alone, Filch," came Hagrid's voice from the Hut. They could hear him rummaging around as he prepared.

"I suppose you think you'll be enjoying yourself with that oaf?" Filch snapped, noting the curious looks on their faces. "Well, think again, girl — it's into the forest you're going and I'm much mistaken if you'll all come out in one piece."

At this, Neville let out a little moan, and Malfoy stopped dead in his tracks.

"The forest?" he repeated, and he didn't sound quite as cool as usual. "We can't go in there at night — there's all sorts of things in there — werewolves, I heard."

Both Hermione and Ron grimaced. They were unsure of why, but they knew that Harriet had a soft-spot for werewolves and wouldn't hear a bad word said about them. One of the Gryffindor students had learnt this the hard way a few months back when he had let slip his distaste for the creatures. He had gone to bed that night to find a very angry snake waiting for him.

Needless to say, nobody in Gryffindor said a word against werewolves with Harriet around. Malfoy wasn't a Gryffindor, though.

"Oh, shove it, Malfoy," she scowled, not really in the mood to chew him out.

Hagrid came striding toward them out of the dark, the moonlight barely giving them enough light to see Fang at his heel. He was carrying his large crossbow, and a quiver of arrows hung over his shoulder.

"Alright," he said, "ready ter go? You be needin' anything else, Filch?" The caretaker aimed a caustic glare at the giant.

"I'll be back at dawn," said Filch, "for what's left of them," he added nastily, and he turned and started back toward the castle, his lamp bobbing away in the darkness.

Malfoy now turned to Hagrid.

"I'm not going in that forest," he said, and Harriet was pleased to hear the note of panic in his voice.

"Yeh are if yeh want ter stay at Hogwarts," said Hagrid fiercely. "Yeh've done wrong an' now yeh've got ter pay fer it." Malfoy didn't move. He looked at Hagrid furiously, but then dropped his gaze.

"Right then," said Hagrid, "now, listen carefully, 'cause it's dangerous what we're gonna do tonight, an' I don' want no one takin' risks. Follow me over here a moment."

He led them to the very edge of the forest. Holding his lamp up high, he pointed down a narrow, winding earth track that disappeared into the thick black trees. A light breeze lifted their hair as they looked into the forest.

"Look there," said Hagrid, "see that stuff shinin' on the ground? Silvery stuff? That's unicorn blood. There's a unicorn in there bin hurt badly by summat. This is the second time in a week. I found one dead last Wednesday. We're gonna try an' find the poor thing. We might have ter put it out of its misery."

"And what if whatever hurt the unicorn finds us first?" said Malfoy, unable to keep the fear out of his voice.

"There's nothin' that lives in the forest that'll hurt yeh if yer with me or Fang," said Hagrid. "An' keep ter the path. Right, now, we're gonna split inter two parties an' follow the trail in diff'rent directions. There's blood all over the place, it must've bin staggerin' around since last night at least."

"I want Fang," said Malfoy quickly, looking at Fang's long teeth.

"All right, but I warn yeh, he's a coward," said Hagrid. "So me, Neville Ron, an' Hermione'll go one way,-"

"Okay," Ron said weakly.

"-Draco, Harriet, an' Fang'll go the other." Both Harriet and Draco gave each other disgusted glances, but Harriet nodded nevertheless. "Now, if any of us finds the unicorn, we'll send up green sparks, right? Get yer wands out an' practice now — that's it — an' if anyone gets in trouble, send up red sparks, an' we'll all come an' find yeh — so, be careful — let's go."

They wandered through the woods for a while until they came to a fork in the path. Giving a reassuring smile to Ron and Hermione, Harriet and Draco began making their way down one side on their own. Fang followed them. As they walked and kept their eyes open, Draco continued to complain.

"This is servant stuff, it's not for students to do. I thought we'd be copying lines or something, if my father knew I was doing this-!" Draco apparently couldn't think of any words to describe his father's wrath. Harriet huffed and rolled her eyes.

"Honestly, Malfoy," she told him tartly, "if I didn't know any better, I'd say you were scared!" Draco frowned at her stopping short.

"I'm not scared, Potter," he told her indignantly, "I just-" A rustling in the bushes cut him off. Harriet whipped her lantern around. For a moment, she thought she saw a hooded figure move through the woods, but when she blinked, it was gone.

"Did you hear that?" Draco gulped, momentarily forgetting himself and grabbing the sleeve of her robe. "Was it a werewolf?"

"Quit it with the werewolves," she hissed. "It isn't even the full moon!" Then Harriet realized that Malfoy still had a firm grip on her sleeve. "And let go of me," she roughly shoved him off and Malfoy scowled.

"Excuse me for trying to comfort you," he said, trying to retain the last of his dignity. Harriet's mouth dropped and she snorted.

"Yea," she said dryly, moving forward and calling Fang with a click of her tongue. "I really needed comforting from the likes of you."

Harriet noticed that splashes of silver were becoming for frequent: there on a bush, on the roots of a tree. It was as though the poor creature had been thrashing around in pain close by. Harriet could see a clearing ahead, through the tangled branches of an ancient oak.

"Look —" she murmured, holding out her arm to stop Malfoy.

Something bright white was gleaming on the ground. They inched closer.

It was the unicorn all right, and it was dead. Harriet had never seen anything so beautiful and sad. Its long, slender legs were stuck out at odd angles where it had fallen and its mane was spread pearly-white on the dark leaves.

Harriet and Draco stood transfixed for a moment, but the snap of a branch snapped them both out of it. Some bushes quivered slightly and then, out of the shadows, a hooded figure, the same one she thought she had seen earlier, came crawling across the ground like some stalking time, Harriet was the one to reach for Malfoy's sleeve, clutching it tightly in a white knuckled grip. She felt Fang press his head to her stomach as the cloaked figure finally reached the unicorn. Harriet hadn't been sure what to expect, but she was not



expecting to see it bend down and lower its head over the gaping wound in its side and begin to drink. Harriet's breath began to come in short, weak, gasps. She couldn't breathe for fear. Malfoy, however, didn't seem to have that problem and let out a terrible scream.

"AAAAAAAAAAAAARGH!"

He turned and bolted, Fang following. Harriet, having still held his sleeve in her hand, stumbled and was pulled backwards, tripping over a root. Draco's scream had caught the attention of the hooded figure (Of course it had, Harriet thought wryly, heart pounding. It probably caught the attention of every creature in the Forbidden Forest). The figure stood up shakily, its head turning to scan the woods. Harriet prayed that it wouldn't see her, as she was slightly concealed by a bush, but it was pointless. It looked right at her and began to walk towards her.

Move. Move. Move. Harriet tried to get her feet or hands or anything to work, but they didn't seem in the mood to listen. The thing took another step towards her and finally her legs decided that that would be a good moment to run.

She shot up and turned around, ready to sprint towards the safety of Hogwarts, but the figure was too close. She felt a hand close on the back of her cloak and, suddenly, she was hit with a pain she had never felt before.

Half-blinded, she tried to move forward, away from the figure, but its grip was too strong. Just as she felt as if her scar was going to split in half, she heard hooves behind her, galloping, and something jumped clean over Harriet, coming between her and the hooded figure.

Falling to her knees, Harriet took several shuddering breaths, waiting for the pain to pass. A few minutes later, once she finally felt as though she was no longer going to throw up, she looked up. The figure had gone. Another creature was standing over her but she could not tell if it was a man or a horse. A centaur, she realized. He had white-blond hair and a palomino body.

"Are you all right?" said the centaur, pulling Harriet to her feet.

"Yes — thank you — what was that?"

The centaur opened his mouth to answer, but then thought better of it. Harriet watched as his bright blue eyes scanned her face and then, after a moment, made the customary flick up to Harriet's scar. Harriet couldn't help but reach up and press the heel of her palm against her still burning scar.

"The forest is not safe, now," he said finally, "especially not for you. My name is Firenze. Can you ride? I must get you back to Hagrid as soon as possible." As he spoke, he moved to lower himself so that she could clamber onto his back

Harriet had never ridden a horse before, but, contrary to what some might think, she was positive that it was nothing like riding a centaur. She couldn't seem to find an appropriate place to hold on and, at the pace they were galloping, Harriet was positive she would fall off. Thankfully, Firenze soon slowed to a walk.

Even after her near death experience, Harriet once again found her insatiable curiosity raging. Firenze didn't seem to notice, though. All he told her was to keep her head low in case of low hanging branches. Unless this was a code of some sorts among the centaurs, he left Harriet's mind up to its own devices to attempt and work out what had were passing through a particularly dense patch of trees, however, when Firenze suddenly stopped. Harriet let out a light squeak as she struggled to hang on from the jolt. Firenze paid it no mind.

"Harriet Potter, do you know what unicorn blood is used for?"

"No," said Harriet, startled by the odd question. "We've only used the horn and tail hair in Potions."

"That is because it is a monstrous thing, to slay a unicorn," said Firenze. "Only one who has nothing to lose, and everything to gain, would commit such a crime. The blood of a unicorn will keep you alive, even if you are an inch from death, but at a terrible price. You have slain something pure and defenseless to save yourself, and you will have but a half-life, a cursed life, from the moment the blood touches your lips."

Harriet found that her mouth was suddenly very dry. She cleared her throat. "But who would choose such a life?" she whispered, although she had a feeling she already knew the answer. Firenze answered her with another question.

"Can you not think of something that is hidden in this very school? Something that would bring you back to full strength and power?"

"The Philosopher's Stone!" Harriet exclaimed. Firenze hissed and she lowered her voice. "But who would go through all this trouble?"

"Can you think of nobody who has waited many years to return to power, who has clung to life, awaiting their chance?"

It was as though an iron fist had clenched suddenly around Harriet's heart. Over the rustling of the trees, he seemed to hear once more what Sirius had told him on the day they had met: "Some say that he died that night. Others aren't so sure. Some think that he didn't have enough human left in him to die, and that he is out there, waiting, biding his time."

"Do you mean," Harriet croaked, "that was Vol- "

"Harriet! Harriet, are you all right?"

Hermione was running toward them down the path, Hagrid puffing along behind her, Ron following.

"I'm fine," said Harriet, hardly knowing what she was saying. "The unicorn's dead, Hagrid, it's in that clearing back there."

"This is where I leave you," Firenze murmured as Hagrid hurried off to examine the unicorn. "You are safe now."

Harriet slid off his back and Firenze looked up at the sky. He sighed.

"Mars is bright tonight," he murmured. He looked back at Harriet, blue eyes bright in the darkness. "Good luck, Harriet Potter," said Firenze. "The planets have been read wrongly before now, even by centaurs. For your sake, and that of your friends, I hope this is one of those times."

He turned and cantered back into the depths of the forest, leaving Harriet, Ron, and Hermione shivering and confused in the dark forest.

The three friends were sitting in the common room. Harriet had finished explaining to Ron and Hermione what had happened and now all three were wide awake.

Harriet couldn't sit down. She paced up and down in front of the fire. She was still shaking.

"Somebody wants the stone for Voldemort... and Voldemort's waiting in the forest... and all this time we thought somebody just wanted to get rich..."

"Stop saying the name!" said Ron in a terrified whisper, as if he thought Voldemort could hear them.

Harriet wasn't listening.

"Firenze saved me, but he shouldn't have done so... he was talking about interfering with what the planets say is going to happen... They must show that Voldemort's coming back... I suppose that it written in the stars that Voldemort is going to kill me..."

"Will you stop saying the name!" Ron hissed.

"Quirrel was crying earlier, which means that he's probably snapped at this point-"

"So admit that Snape is pressuring him to steal the Stone!" Ron said triumphantly.

"Did you not hear a word I've been saying?" Harriet demanded. "Voldemort," Ron flinched, "is waiting in the Forbidden Forest! He's the one making Quirrel do all this stuff, not Snape! It makes sense!"

"How did you know that Quirrel was crying earlier?" Hermione asked suddenly. "We didn't have Defense today." Harriet blinked.

"Oh, er," she said, "I heard some other students talking about it in the hall." Hermione nodded, satisfied, and Harriet continued

feverishly. "So all I've got to wait for now is Quirrel to steal the Stone, then Voldemort will be able to come and finish me off..."

Hermione looked very frightened, but she had a word of comfort.

"Harriet, everyone says Dumbledore's the only one You-Know-Who was ever afraid of, with Dumbledore around, You-Know-Who won't touch you. Anyway, who says the centaurs are right? It sounds like fortune-telling to me, and Professor McGonagall says that's a very imprecise branch of magic."

The sky had turned light before they stopped talking. They went to bed exhausted, their throats sore. But the night's surprises weren't over.

When Harriet pulled back her sheets, she found her invisibility cloak folded neatly underneath them. There was a note pinned to it:

Just in case.

AN: Alright, so I really am sorry for the wait, but I've been really busy studying AP Exams and writing papers and...yea. I know: not the greatest excuse. I figure that I'll probably end up updating more like this (that is, once a month) instead of as frequently as I used to, although I will definitely do my best to get new chapters up as fast as I can. I could write shorter chapters with more frequent updates, if you'd like, so let me know and I might give it a try.

Thanks again for all the love you guys have shown this story. It makes me feel really... well, happy (although "happy" doesn't seem to cover it. "Elated" might be a bit better). Keep reviewing, adding to your favorites, and subscribing, please! And let me know what you think about the whole update situation.

tinyrose65

Hogwarts-May 15, 1992

Harriet was not quite sure how she had managed to survive the past few days. She had spend every waking second convinced that Voldemort himself was going to barge through the doors of her dorm-room. Her dreams were plagued with visions of her visit to the forest, always ending in the same way: with her shooting up in bed due to a scalding pain in her scar.

"Its hurt before," she complained to Ron and Hermione, her hand pressed hard to her head, as they walked through one of the courtyards after their exam. Both were looking at her with barely concealed concern.

"Maybe you should go to Madam Pomfrey," suggested Hermione sensibly. Harriet was shaking her head before Hermione had even finished. She knew it would do no good.

"I think its a warning," she murmured quietly so that nobody else would overhear. "It means danger is coming."

"Well of course danger is coming," Ron said, sounding highly exasperated. "You-Know-Who is living the in the Forbidden Forest, Snape is trying to steal the Stone-"

"-or Quirrel," Harriet interjected. Despite the fact that Snape wasn't even looking at her, it didn't mean that she thought him capable of stealing the Stone.

"Or Quirrel is trying to steal the Stone," Ron conceded. Hermione huffed.

"Yes, but you are both forgetting that Hagrid is the only one who knows how to get past Fluffy!" Ron nodded cheerfully in agreement, but something that had been bothering Harriet for a long time finally came to light.

"I am such an idiot!" she cried, before breaking into a run. Ron and Hermione, already well accustomed to Harriet's rather bizarre behavior and odd habit of running off without warning, followed quickly.

"Harriet," Hermione panted, "slow down! Whats the matter?"

"Don't you think its odd?" Harriet demanded, stopping so short that both Ron and Hermione almost tripped. Harriet reached a hand out to steady them. "The one thing Hagrid wants more than anything else in the world is a dragon, and suddenly he meets a man with a dragon egg? I mean, how many people do you know who walk around with illegal dragon eggs in their pockets?"

"We are idiots," Ron groaned. Hermione tutted and then smirked.

"I'm not arguing." The three then exchanged a look and, as if by a secret signal, took off, sprinting rapidly towards the forest grounds. When they got to Hagrid's hut, they found him humming to himself and knitting what looked to be a large, yellow tent.

"Hello," he greeted them cheerfully, putting down his knitting sticks. He rubbed his hands together to wipe the dirt off them and offered them some biscuits, which they denied. He set the tray back down and looked at them with a large smile shining through his tangle of hair. "You lot finished with your exams?"

"Yea," Harriet said curtly, feeling a pang of guilt when his smile lessened. She grimaced and sighed, then softening her voice. "Listen, Hagrid, the stranger you won Norbert from? The one down at the pub? Did you ever see his face?"

"No, can't say I did," Hagrid said, raising an eyebrow and scratching his chin. "He was wearin' a cloak an' he had a hood pulled up o'er is head."

"And you didn't think that was weird?" Ron gaped, incredulous. Hagrid drew himself up, slightly indignant, to defend himself.

"Well," he huffed, fixing Ron with an annoyed look, "yeh get all sorts down at that pub. Yeh ne'er know who yer go'n ter meet!"

"Did you talk to this stranger?" Hermione inquired, loosing her patience with the Grounds Keeper, despite her affection for him. "What did you talk about?"

"Er," Hagrid scratched his head, "I can't really remember. He kept buying me drinks an', well," Hagrid shrugged. "I remember, though,

he was worried that I wouldn't be able ter take care of a dragon, but I told him that after Fluffy," Hagrid wagged his finger to make a point, "I says that a dragon ain't goin' ter be a problem."

"Did he seem interested in Fluffy?" Harriet gasped. Hagrid snorted.

"Of course he was," Hagrid waved his hand dismissively. "How often do yeh come across a three-headed dog, even if yeh are in the trade? But," Hagrid mused, "I told 'im that the trick with any animal is knowing how ter calm him. Like with Fluffy, all yeh have ter do is play a bit o' music and he falls right ter sleep." Hagrid realized his great mistake.

"I should not have told yer that," he muttered. "I should not have-wait! Where are yeh going?" Harriet, Ron and Hermione had already taken off across the yard, making a mad dash for the entryway of the school.

They stopped in the middle of the hallway. Harriet's heart was hammering, but not because of the running. Both Hermione and Ron had stopped as well, them looking almost as panicked as she felt.

"We have to find Dumbledore," Hermione said immediately, her mind obviously racing at a million miles per hour. "We have to get to his office-

"But we don't know where it is," Ron pointed out, making Hermione groan in pure frustration and anxiety. "Fred and George haven been there enough times, though. I could ask them where it is-"

"I know where it is," Harriet said, "I went there the first day my parents come to get me. We don't know the password, though."

"Maybe we could just stand outside," Ron posed. "If we scream loud enough-"

"If you scream loud enough, then what, Mr. Weasley?" It was Professor McGonnagal. The three of them all gasped since she had caught them by surprise. "Perhaps I can help you with whatever shenanigans you three are up to?"

"No shenanigans, Professor," Ron said quickly. "We need to see Professor Dumbledore." McGonnagal looked highly skeptical.



"Professor Dumbledore is a very important wizard, Mr. Weasley. He has been summoned by the Ministry of Magic and is on his way to London-"

"Now?" Harriet cried. "But this is important!" Harriet had never seen McGonnagal look more amused.

"More important," she chuckled, "then the Ministry of Magic?"

"Its about the Philosopher's Stone! Somebody is trying to steal it!" Harriet blurted out. Thankfully, nobody was in the hallway to hear her. That didn't stop McGonnagal from dropping all of her books and going completely pale. She took a step closer to them and began to speak in a very feverish whisper.

"Now, listen here," she muttered, "I do not know how you three became privy to such information, but I can assure you that the Stone is perfectly safe!" The three friends made to protest, but McGonnagal cut them off. "Enough," she hissed. "Now, I expect you three to join in with the other students in their festivities and never hear a word of this pass your lips again!"

Before either one of them could utter a word to change her mind, she had rushed away shaking her head in pure astonishment.

"What do we do now?" Harriet scowled, glaring at McGonnagal's retreating back. Hermione pursed her lips.

"Let's follow Quirrel!" Hermione suggested. "He can't do anything if he has three nosy kids tagging along with him!" Ron frowned.

"If Quirrel really is working with You-Know-Who," he sighed, "do you actually think that he'd be afraid of three first-years?" Hermione blinked and then, realizing her foolishness, grinned sheepishly. Harriet could see a plan forming.

"Thats not a bad idea," she said. "But instead of following him, lets just keep him busy: distract him. Maybe we can hold him off taking the Stone until Dumbledore gets back!" Hermione made a disbelieving sound in the back of her throat.

"Would he believe that?"

"Are you kidding?" scoffed Ron. He made his voice high-pitched and girly. "Professor Quirrel! Professor Quirrel! I'm not sure about my answer for question fifty-seven!"

Harriet snickered and then, seeing Hermione's look, quickly quieted. "That wasn't funny, Ron," she coughed. "Not at all realistic."

Harriet Potter, Near the Third Floor Corridor, Hogwarts-May 15, 1992

Hermione had not been amused. That was how Harriet had found herself with the least desired spot on their group: guarding the way to the third floor corridor. She bit her lip and shuffled her feet. Despite the fact that she was completely hidden beneath her cloak, she had never felt more exposed. She fingered the small mirror in her hand, waiting for Hermione or Ron to call her.

She heard the sound of footsteps and pressed herself against the wall. Just in time, too, since Quirrel rounded the corner a few moments later. He was walking quickly and mumbling to himself.

"Guys," she hissed into the mirror, speaking quietly and following Quirrel slowly. "I found Quirrel! He's heading towards the third floor corridor!"

"He is?" it was Hermione's voice, frantic and hushed. "Harriet, I'm sorry! I tried to distract him, but he brushed me off!"

"It's okay," she whispered distractedly, watching confused as Quirrel tentatively fingered his turban and rubbed his temples. They were too close to Fluffy's room. There was no time for her to create a diversion of her own. "I'm going to follow him."

"Hang on," it was Ron's voice now. "I thought we said we weren't going to do that!"

"I don't have choice! We can't let him get to the Stone! Maybe I can hold him off for a little bit. I'm no match for him really, though, so see if you can get a message to Dumbledore or McGonnagal or Snape, even."

"Are you mental?" demanded Ron.

"You just figured that out?" was Harriet's retort. They were making their towards the staircase now. Harriet began to follow Quirrel as he climbed, careful not to bump into him.

"You're a great witch, Harriet," came Hermione's voice softly over the mirror. Harriet smiled and was about to answer, when she stumbled. A trick step, she realized, falling forward. She placed her hands out to steady her fall, but the cloak got tangled in her legs. She felt herself begin to fall backward and instinctively placed her hands to cover her head and neck, dropping the mirror on one of the steps and leaving her ribs open to take quite a beating as she fell downwards.

She groaned when she finally hit the bottom of the stairs. "That looked like it hurt."

Her eyes flew open at the sound of the voice. She blinked and began groping around the floor for her glasses. Somebody kicked them toward her and she put them on. They were cracked, but she could still easily identify Quirrel through them.

For once, he wasn't twitching.

She made to get up, but his wand held to her throat stopped her short. "Professor Quirrel," she gasped, "I was just-"

"Following me." It wasn't a question. She couldn't say anything to deny it. He smirked and took a few steps backward, keeping his eyes on her. He reached down to pick up her cloak from where it had landed. Harriet resisted the urge to make him put it down.

"A rather nifty invention," he said, looking at her like the cat who had cornered the mouse, "but rather foolish of you to forget about the step. If you are so desperate to see where I am going, why don't you come with me?" The small smile he had worn on his face dropped when she made no move to get up. He gestured with his wand. "Now."

Harriet jumped up, ignoring the pain in her side with the ease that came after years at the Dursleys. She walked ahead of him and began to climb the stairs. She took a deep breath, remembering Hermione once mention to her that, when you were panicked, it was

one of the best things you could do, because it would help bring oxygen to your brain. At least, it was something like that. Harriet was having a difficult time remembering.

As she walked, she noticed a bright glimmer on the ground. Her mirror had survived the fall! She could see the faces of both Ron and Hermione glimmering worriedly. She could still feel Quirrel's eyes on her back and quickened her step. Purposefully and deliberately she brought her foot down on the mirror as she climbed the stairs.

"What was that?" demanded Quirrel, pushing her out of the way. She took a step back and revealed the fragments of the broken mirror that belonged on the stairs. Had it been under any other circumstances, she would have cried to see her father's mirror like that, but now was not the time for tears. She looked up at him cautiously.

"It was just a mirror, sir." He mumbled something about vain and silly girls, then lead her further up the stairs.

Ron and Hermione, Hogwarts-May 15, 1992

"Hermione!" Hermione let out a sigh of relief when she saw Ron, although the ball of fear in her stomach was as large as ever. "Harriet-"

"Is gone, I know," her voice came out shriller than normal, so she tried to calm herself down. "I was hoping it was just on my end," she trailed off and Ron's shake of his head confirmed what she had been afraid of.

"We need to find somebody to help us," Ron decided. Hermione nodded, then her eyes widened. Ron was confused as to why, until he turned around and saw Professor Snape looking at them, eyes narrowed.

"Help you with what?" He sneered. "I hope that this is not another one of your foolish pranks, Mr. Weasley." Ron took in a deep breath. "We all know how well that turned out last time."

"No, sir," Hermione said quickly. "We were just-"

"Just what, Ms. Granger?" Snape demanded. "Not up to no good, I hope. You can't blame me for being a bit suspicious. Two young Gryffindors inside on a day like today?" He looked at them cautiously. "Where is your fearless," he spat, "leader?"

Ron shifted his weight from foot to foot, unsure of what to say. Sure, Harriet seemed to trust Snape, but that didn't mean that he did. Hermione was the one who made up her mind first. She blurted out quickly, "I think Harriet is in trouble!"

Snape looked as though he was resisting the urge to snort. "Trouble? What has she done this time? Befriended a giant?"

Ron, taking a cue from Hermione, said, in one breath, "We think that Quirrel has her!"

Snape's expression didn't change, but both Ron and Hermione could sense a definite shift in his demeanor. He looked at them silently for a moment before spinning on his heel and proceeding briskly down the hallway. "Come with me," was his curt explanation.

Both Ron and Hermione exchanged glances before following him

Harriet Potter, Hogwarts-May 15, 1992

Ron would have loved that, Harriet found herself thinking after the most intense chess match she had ever played. She got off of her chess piece with wobbly legs, shaking off the stiffness in her arms, which were achey from having to hang on for so long. Quirrel seemed absolutely fine, albeit a bit pale. Then again, when wasn't he?

Harriet was having a difficult time imagining what other enchantments the Hogwarts professors had cooked up. The Devil's Snare was most likely Sprout, Harriet reasoned, the winged keys were Flitwick's, and the chess set had to have been McGonnagal's. That left Snape's, Quirrel's, and Dumbledore's.

Harriet followed Quirrel through the next door and was met with the overpowering smell of rotten meat and dirty socks. She gulped at the sight of the troll in front of her. At least now she knew what Quirrel's protection was.

Ron and Hermione, Hogwarts-May 15,1992

Ron and Hermione sat guiltily in Snape's office. He had brought them here and forced them to explain everything they had figured out. They had expected him to yell at them or lecture them or something, but instead, he had left them sitting alone in their seats, making sure to lock the door behind him.

"Harriet must be in a lot of trouble," Hermione whimpered, "for Snape to leave in a real hurry, like that." Ron shook his head.

"I'm sure she is just fine," he assured her, sounding a lot more calm than he actually was. From what his brothers had told him, it was rare to see Snape lose his composure, so it must have been something pretty bad to make him run out of the room like that.

Harriet Potter, Hogwarts-May 15, 1992

Harriet stared with wide eyes at the troll on the floor. Quirrel let out a noise of satisfaction and placed his wand back in the folds of his robe. He no longer needed to worry about Harriet escaping because they were all ready deep within the underbelly of Hogwarts. They had survived dangerous plants, winged keys, and, just now, a very large troll. Quirrel turned to her.

"Impressive, hm?" He chuckled, making the hairs on the back of Harriet's neck stand up and prickling goose-flesh on her arms. "You can say that I have a gift with trolls."

Harriet just nodded weakly, not really sure what to tell him. The only thing she could focus on at the moment was staying alive. So far, she had yet to see a way out of her situation and she didn't think that she was going to see one for a while. Quirrel startled her by yanking her shoulder and pulling her forward through the next doorway.

Severus Snape, Hogwarts Owlery-May 15, 1992

Severus Snape was not a happy man. Granted, he was rarely in a cheerful mood, but at the moment he was even more sour than normal. Potter and her idiotic friends had not, as he had hoped, let the matter of the Stone go, despite Lily's assurances that Harriet was done with her amateur investigations.

To make matters worse, if what Weasley and Granger said was true, that meant the Dark Lord was out there somewhere attempting to regain life. He, like the Headmaster, had always assumed that the Dark Lord would return one day, but he had hoped that it would be sooner rather than later. He had also hoped that Albus would be there when the Dark Lord finally decided to make his return.

Not doing god-knows-what for the Minister in London!

He eyed the owls in the Owlery. He needed one that was both fast and intelligent, not to mention up to the long journey to London. A flash of white caught his eye: Hedwig, Potter's uncommonly smart owl. He made a move to place the note to her leg, only to have her snap at his fingers!

He fixed her with his trademark glare and went to try again, but the ball of feathers had the audacity to hop away and fix him with a reproachful stare.

"Do you want your mistress to die?" the man hissed, thankful that nobody was here to listen to him talk to a bird. The aforementioned bird gave him a look that clearly said, "Of course not, you idiot." Snape shook the note in his hand. "Then I suggest you let me attach this note to your leg!"

This time, amazingly, the bird held perfectly still, even having the kindness to stick her leg out for him. He worked quickly to fasten the note, knowing that if the Dark Lord really was working with Quirrel, Potter did not have much time to spare. "Get that note to Dumbledore," was his order to Hedwig. "Quickly!"

The owl gave a soft hoot, spread her wings, and soared through the window. Snape himself would have gone through the trap door to stop Quirrel, but with his old master in the picture, the equation changed. Hopefully, the Headmaster would return before things were too late.

Harriet Potter, Hogwarts-May 15, 1992

Harriet had to give credit to Professor Snape. Out of all the enchantments they had faced, his was, by far, the most simple, but,

at the same time, the most difficult: A row of seven bottles lined up in a row on a table, along with a piece of paper that read:

Danger lies before you, while safety lies behind,

Two of us will help you, which ever you would find,

One among us seven will let you move ahead,

Another will transport the drinker back instead,

Two among our number hold only nettle wine,

Three of us are killers, waiting bidden in line.

Choose, unless you wish to stay here forevermore,

To help you in your choice, we give you these clues four:

First, however slyly the poison tries to hide

You will always find some on nettle wine's left side;

Second, different are those who stand at either end,

But if you would move onward, neither is your friend;

Third, as you see clearly, all are different size,

Neither dwarf nor giant holds death in their insides;

Fourth, the second left and the second on the right

Are twins once you taste them, though different at first sight.

Plenty of wizards, Harriet mused, as she watched Quirrel mutter to himself and pace back and forth, didn't have an ounce of logic. Harriet was hoping greatly that Quirrel was one of them. Her hopes were dashed when Quirrel confidently picked up the smallest bottle.

"This one," he announced, far too loudly, in Harriet's opinion, "will get us through the fire to the Stone. My master will be pleased."



Harriet shuddered. Since they had first begun to work their way through the enchantments, this was the first time Quirrel had mentioned his intentions and Voldemort. For some reason, it made everything all too real. Harriet felt her heart skip a beat when she realized something. "There isn't enough."

"Excuse me?"

"The potion," Harriet explained, hardly daring to hope, "there isn't enough to get us both across the fire." Quirrel frowned and looked at it, then looked back at her.

"There isn't," Quirrel muttered, "but I can't just leave you here." He scowled and picked up another bottle, shoving it at her. She took it, almost dropping it. She stared at it dumbly, not too sure what to do with it.

"Drink it," Quirrel ordered. Harriet's eyes widened. "Its poison." Harriet resisted the urge to ask him how that was supposed to make her want to drink it, instead looking back down at the flask. She bit her lip, knowing that if she didn't drink the potion, Quirrel would most likely use his wand to kill her, then took the cup to her mouth and took a large gulp.

The first thing Harriet realized was that Quirrel was an idiot. The taste of the wine was too strong to be ignored: Quirrel had chosen wrong. Thinking quickly, she let herself fall to the floor and breathed as lightly as she dared, trying not to move too much.

It worked. Quirrel, thinking her dead, took a gulp of his own potion. Sadly, he had not been wrong with this one, and was able to safely make it through the fire. She stayed on the ground as long as she dared, waiting to make sure Quirrel really was gone, before sitting up straight.

She got up off the floor and moved to the remaining potions. If she could figure out which potion would let her out of the fire, than she could get a message to somebody. She reached for the paper when she noticed something odd. The cup Quirrel had used was full again. She resisted the urge to hit herself upside the head.

Of course they refilled themselves once they were done. How else would Snape or Dumbledore or anybody else be able to follow

somebody through in a situation like this? Thanking Snape's cautiousness, she picked up the potion to take her through the fire.

She stopped for a moment. She had already admitted to Ron and Hermione that she was no match for Quirrel, so what was she thinking, going after him? Nobody else is coming, she rationalized, better me than nobody at all. Harriet drank the potion, almost dropping the cup when she felt a strong chill run through her, and then placed the cup down on the table. Closing her eyes, she leapt through the flames.

When she opened her eyes, she found herself in the last chamber. Quirrel was standing there, looking very annoyed and just as surprised.

"I gave you the wrong cup, didn't I?" he said, looking very fearful. Harriet felt her stomach do somersaults as she nodded. What was he so afraid of?

"I know what you are doing!" she told him bravely. She couldn't fight him, but she might be able to keep him talking long enough. Quirrel snorted and looked doubtful, so Harriet decided to prove it. "You're trying to get the Philosopher's Stone for Voldemort!"

Quirrel suddenly looked angry. "How dare you say his name! You are not worthy to use the Dark Lord's name!"

"He isn't a lord," Harriet said tartly, crossing her arms over her chest, "and he certainly isn't one of mine." Harriet suddenly asked, "Was it you who tried to kill me and jinx my broom?" Quirrel laughed.

"Of course it was! But your friend Miss Granger accidentally knocked me over as she rushed to set fire to Snape at that Quidditch match. She broke my eye contact with you. Another few seconds and I'd have got you off that broom. I'd have managed it before then if Snape hadn't been muttering a countercurse, trying to save you."

"So Snape was trying to save me!" Harriet said triumphantly.

"He was," Quirrel affirmed. "That's why he was so eager to referee your last Quidditch match. Not that your friends thought so," mused Quirrel. "They all thought he was trying to finish you off. Just as I had hoped. Then again, who would suspect P-p-oor s-s-stuttering P-

professor Quirrel, when Snape was swooping all about the castle, like the large dungeon bat he is? It was a clever thought to set your snake after me-

"Isaura!" Harriet exclaimed. "Where is she? What have you done with her?"

"I wouldn't be too worried about her, Potter," Quirrel tutted, "not when your own life is at stake. I am going to have to kill you tonight, you know."

Before she could come up with a retort, Quirrell snapped his fingers. Ropes sprang out of thin air and wrapped themselves tightly around Harriet.

"You're too nosy to live, Potter. Scurrying around the school on Halloween like that, for all I knew you'd seen me coming to look at what was guarding the Stone."

"You let the troll in, too!"

"Certainly. Like I said, I have a special gift with trolls — you saw what I did to the one in the chamber back there. Of course, your precious little Potions master was not fooled. He headed straight to the third floor in hopes that he might head me off. He had been suspicious of me since the Quidditch match, you see. At least the dog gave his leg a good bite."

"Fluffy," Harriet didn't know what else to say. Quirrel looked at her as though she was insane. "The dog's name is Fluffy," Harriet elaborated. Quirrel scowled.

"Enough of this nonsense, Potter. I need to look at this interesting mirror."

It was only then that Harriet realized what was standing behind Quirrell. It was the Mirror of Erised.

"Only that fool Dumbledore would come up with something like this to protect the Stone," Quirrel scowled. His face took on an awe-filled quality. "I see the Stone...I'm presenting it to my Master...but how do I get it? Should I break the mirror?"

Harriet's struggles to loosen the rope ceased as a rasping voice filled the room, seeming to come from everywhere. "Use the girl."

Harriet's breathing picked up as Quirrel turned his focus back to her. "Potter, come here!" He said, before loosening the ropes. Harriet shook them off and walked slowly towards Quirrel, trying to figure out where the voice had come from.

"I saw you and Snape in the Forest," Harriet said, trying to buy time. Quirrel let out an impatient sigh.

"Yes," he told her. "He was threatening me-as if I could be afraid of him with the Dark Lord on my side. He warned me not to try anything against you again."

"But Snape always seemed to hate me so much," Harriet said, referring to the careful guise she and the Professor had used. She hadn't seen the importance of it before (and she still didn't), but at the moment she was thankful for it, since Quirrel seemed to have forgotten about the stone for a moment. She had stopped walking at this point.

"Oh, he does," said Quirrell casually, "heavens, yes. He was at Hogwarts with your father, didn't you know? They loathed each other. But he never wanted you dead." Suddenly, Quirrel let out a loud scream and Harriet jumped backwards as Quirrel clutched the edges of his turban. A few moments later, he stopped, gasping for breath.

"Of course," he muttered, "of course, Master. I apologize, my liege." Harriet's eyes widened. Was Voldemort here?

"Enough of this, girl," he snapped at her. "Come here."

Harriet began to walk forward once again, her mind racing. She didn't know what to do anymore. She knew that if she looked into the mirror, she would see how to get the Stone, since that was, at the moment, what she wanted most, but even if she did manage to figure out where to get it, how would she take it without Quirrel knowing? How would she escape.

Quirrel yanked her forward by her shoulder and held her still in front of the mirror. Although his grip was hard, she felt her eyes tear up

not from the bruising hold, but from the sudden shooting pain in her scar.

"Tell me," he hissed, "what do you see?"

Harriet watched the mirror closely. She saw herself: pale and trembling. Then, suddenly, her reflection grinned. It placed its hand in its pocket and pulled out a small, red, stone. It held it for a moment, before winking and placing it back in her pocket. Harriet took in a small breath as she felt something very real fall into her own pocket. She had gotten the Stone. Now all she had to do was get out of here alive.

"I...I see me." She began. Quirrel didn't even bother to correct her poor grammar. "I'm shaking hands with Dumbledore. I've won the house cup for Gryffindor!"

"She lies..." hissed the same voice as before. Harriet frowned. It seemed to be coming from Quirrel's turban.

"Tell the truth!" Quirrel demanded, turning on her before she had another chance to figure out where Voldemort was. "What do you see?"

"Let me talk to her," the voice hissed. Quirrel began to twitch again.

"Master," he whimpered, "you are not strong enough-"

"I am strong enough," the voice said silkily, "for this."

Quirrel seemed to take this as an order. Much to Harriet's horror, he began to carefully unwind his turban. She had no idea what was going on, but she knew it wasn't good. She was rooted to the spot, her breath coming in short gasps.

Finally, the turban fell away. Quirrel was facing her, but she could see the reflection of the back of his head in the mirror. Only...it wasn't the back of his head. There was a face. The most terrible face Harriet had ever seen. Even worse than Dudley's. It was as white as a ghost and its red eyes (just mere slits, like its nose) were glaring at her with a hatred that Harriet hadn't even realized was possible.

"Harriet Potter," the face said softly. Harriet heard every word loud and clear, though. "So we meet again."

"Voldemort," Harriet breathed. The face twisted itself into a very odd expression. It took Harriet a moment to realize that it was trying to smirk.

"So you remember me," Voldemort rasped. "Do you see, Harriet Potter? Do you see what I've become because of you? Forced to live off another-like a mere parasite! Unicorn blood sustains me, but it cannot give me my own body. For that, I need something else. Something that rests in your pocket."

Harriet snaked her hand down into her pocket and felt the Stone. It was cool around her fingers. She met Voldemort's eyes. He was waiting expectantly. Harriet shook her head and turned to run, but Quirrel was prepared. In less than a second, the room was suddenly surrounded in flame. Harriet turned around again, so that she might see Voldemort. He was smiling now.

"Don't be fool," he hissed, sounding highly amused for somebody living off the back of somebody else's head. "Why suffer a horrific death, when you can join me and live?"

Harriet felt a surge of disgust well up inside of her. This thing had murdered her grandparents, tried to murder her, and separated her from her parents for ten years. And yet, Voldemort had the audacity to ask her to join him? "Never!" She cried, turning around, looking for a way out.

There was none.

Voldemort laughed. "Bravery," he said, "yes, your grandparents had it to. But don't be a fool." He eyed her calculatingly. "Tell me, Harriet, would you like to see your grandmother and grandfather alive once more?" Harriet didn't say a word, giving Voldemort all the answer he needed. "Together," he said, "we can bring them back. All I ask is that you give me something in return."

Harriet pulled it out of her pocket and looked down at it. It wasn't that remarkable a Stone. Surely nobody would blame her if she gave it to him.

Voldemort nodded (as best he could) in encouragement. "That's it, Harriet. There is no good and evil. There is simply power, and those too weak to seek it! Together, we can do extraordinary things. Just give me the Stone!"

Harriet could see them: her grandmother and grandfather. They were reflected in the mirror and they were looking at her so lovingly... It was her fault they were dead, really... If she could bring them back, they could be a real family again... her mother and father would be so grateful...

It was a thought of her mum and dad that brought Harriet back to reality. Biting down the bile that rose in her throat at the thought that she had almost willingly surrendered to Voldemort, Harriet cried, "You liar! My grandparents are dead!"

"KILL HER!" cried Voldemort, his face twisted into a furious mask. In an instant, Quirrel had leapt across the room and his hand circled around her neck. They slammed into the wall and Harriet dropped the Stone.

Her throat was on fire, but even more surprising was that her head felt as though it might split in two. Gasping, she tried to grab the Stone, in hopes that she might prevent Voldemort from reaching it, but Quirrel's hold was too strong and it lay just out of reach. Her need for oxygen too great to ignore, she reached for Quirrel's hand, hoping to pry it off of her neck. To her surprise, Quirrel let go of her instantly.

He backed away from her screaming and clutching at his hand. Sitting up, Harriet watched wide-eyed as his hand seemed to crumble. "Gah! What is this magic!"

Harriet looked back and down at her own hands, then back to Quirrel. "FOOL!" yelled Voldemort. "Get the Stone!"

Quirrel reached out and made a grab for the Stone, but Harriet was there to meet him. Acting almost on instinct, she took his hand and reached for his face. Quirrel screamed loudly and Harriet's head pounded as he tried to claw her off of him, but she didn't let go until the pain finally became too much.

Backing away, she watched stunned as Quirrel's face seemed to turn to dust and, before her eyes, he fell, nothing more than a pile of ashes.

Harriet took another step backwards and, once it seemed as though Quirrel was actually dead, she turned around and picked up the Stone, just holding it in her hand. All this trouble for such a tiny rock, she mused. She was just about to try to figure out how to get out of the chamber, when a soft swishing sound alerted her.

She whipped around and gasped as a gray plume of smoke, with Voldemort's face seemingly in the middle, rushed at her. She screamed as it ran her through, the pain in her head unbearable. She could hear somebody calling her name, but couldn't tell whether or not it was real.

She fell down...down...down...

The Marauders and Lily, Hogwarts-May 15, 1992

Remus had never heard Dumbledore sound more grave, save the for the night that Lily and James were attacked. Therefore, it was understandable that he, Sirius, Lily, and James rushed to Hogwarts as fast as they possibly could.

They weren't sure what to expect, but none of them had been expecting to hear Dumbledore's explanation of what had happened between her and Quirrel. As soon as the headmaster let slip where she was, the four made a mad dash for the Hospital Wing, not even waiting to hear Dumbledore's explanation for Quirrel's death.

The sight of Harriet, lying on a hospital bed, almost motionless, greeted them. Madam Pomfrey had just finished wrapping some bandages around her badly burned hands. She gave them each a sympathetic smile as they sat down, then closed the curtains around them.

"Oh, Harriet," murmured Lily, beginning to softly run her fingers over Harriet's bandaged hands. Harriet smiled softly in her sleep.

"What in the world was she thinking?" grimaced James, placing his hand over his wife's. Lily shrugged, honestly not knowing. Perhaps, if they had lived with their daughter longer, they would have some



sense of the inner workings of her mind, but, for now, they were just as lost as any other stranger.

"Does Madam Pomfrey know when she is going to wake up?" asked Remus. Sirius shook his head and sighed, shifting his weight on the hard chair, trying to make himself comfortable. They were in for a long wait.

Harriet Potter, Hogwarts-May 18, 1992

When Harriet finally realized that she was waking up, she resisted the urge to groan. It had been such a deep sleep. The deepest she had had in a while, with no aching scars or late-night missions around the castle or dreams of Quirrel and his turban

Quirrel's turban! Voldemort had been hiding underneath! Had it been a dream? No, it wasn't. She needed to make sure that Quirrel had not gotten his hands on the Stone. Harriet struggled to open her eyes. She could see something gold and sparkling through her squinted lids, but she couldn't open her eyes further due to the bright light. The lights dimmed a moment later, allowing her to finally wake up fully.

She found Professor Dumbledore standing over her. She went to say something, but he held his finger to his lips and gestured to the other side of the bed. Harriet turned and saw both her parents asleep in the hospital wing chairs.

"Sirius is with Remus," the old man whispered, pointing to the bed next to them with the curtains drawn, "who is resting after the full moon." Harriet nodded. Her eyes widened when she saw the large stack of gifts on the bedside table.

"From your admirers," Dumbledore explained.

"Admirers?" Harriet asked softly.

"What happened down in the chamber between you and Professor Quirrel is a complete secret. So, naturally, the entire school knows." Dumbledore explained, as if it was obvious. "The Weasley twins sent you the toilet seat." Harriet giggled. "Madam Pomfrey tried to confiscate it, but they managed to get it past her." Dumbledore chuckled.

"How long have I been in here?" Harriet asked.

"Three days. Mr. Ronald Weasley and Miss Granger will be most relieved you have come round, they have been extremely worried. As Isaura has been." Dumbledore reached behind her and pulled something off the hospital cot headboard.

"Isaura!" Harriet exclaimed, delighted. For a moment, she worried that she had woken up her parents, but thankfully she hadn't. Harriet took her friend and stroked her head gently, making Isaura hiss with pleasure.

"I found her locked up in one of Professor Quirrel's desk drawers." Harriet nodded at her headmaster's explanation, then gasped, remembering something.

"What happened to the Stone?"

"Relax, my dear girl. The Stone has been destroyed."

"Destroyed?" said Harriet blankly. "But Nicolas Flamel —"

"Oh, you know about Nicolas?" said Dumbledore, sounding quite delighted.

"He and Mrs. Flamel came over during Christmas break," Harriet said weakly, not quite sure what to make of her headmaster's delight.

"Ah yes," he chuckled. "Remus mentioned that to me. In all honesty, I'm surprised it took you longer. Especially with Ms. Granger giving you a hand. As for the matter, Nicolas and I have talked. We both agree that its for the best."

"But that means he and his wife will die, won't they? They were so nice..."

"They have enough Elixir stored to set their affairs in order and then, yes, they will die."

Dumbledore smiled at the look of amazement on Harriet's face.

"To one as young as you, I'm sure it seems incredible, but to Nicolas and Perenelle, it really is like going to bed after a very, very long day. After all, to the well-organized mind, death is but the next great adventure. You know, the Stone was really not such a wonderful thing. As much money and life as you could want! The two things most human beings would choose above all — the trouble is, humans do have a knack of choosing precisely those things that are worst for them."

Harriet was quiet for a moment, not really sure what to say. Then, she took a deep breath.

"Sir?" said Harriet. "Even without the Stone, he'll try and come back, won't he?"

"You mean Voldemort, Harriet?" When she nodded, he sighed. "I am afraid he will, Harriet. I do not know how, or when, but Voldemort is indeed still out there, searching for a way back to life. There are ways..." Dumbledore trailed off for a moment, then looked at Harriet curiously.

"Harriet," he began, do you know why Professor Quirrel could not touch you in the dungeons that night?" Harriet shook her head. "It was because of your grandmother," Dumbledore said gently and Harriet frowned, confused. "She sacrificed herself for you and that love, so pure and strong, left a never fading mark on you."

Harriet reached up and fingered her scar, but Dumbledore shook his head. "No, not like your scar. This mark cannot be seen. It is found within your very skin. Quirrell, full of hatred, greed, and ambition, sharing his soul with Voldemort, could not touch you for this reason. It was agony to touch a person marked by something so good."

Harriet nodded, but stopped quickly, because it made her head hurt. Then she said, "Sir, there are some other things I'd like to know, if you can tell me... things I want to know the truth about..."

"There is something else," Harriet began. Dumbledore made no move to deny her, so she took it as a go ahead. "In the chamber, the topic of Snape came up—"

"Professor Snape, Harriet," Dumbledore said gently. Harriet nodded.

"Right, him. I know that he and I have to pretend to hate each other because of Snape's job in the war," Harriet said carefully, not knowing the exact details of that job. Dumbledore nodded. "But Quirrel said that Snape hated me because of my dad. What did he mean? I mean, I noticed that Professor Snape and my father aren't exactly friends, but they don't hate each other, do they?"

"That," Dumbledore sighed, "is a question for your father. All I can tell you is that your father and Professor Snape went to school together. As a matter of fact, they shared a rivalry similar to that of yours and Mr. Malfoy."

"They did?" Harriet said, surprised. Dumbledore nodded.

"Then your father did something that Snape could never forgive." Harriet looked at Dumbledore curiously. "He saved his life."

"From what?" Harriet demanded. Dumbledore shook his head, so Harriet knew that it was something she would have to ask her father. She asked a different question. "But why would that mean that he is supposed to hate me?"

"Your father saved Professor Snape's life, so Snape found himself in your father's debt, which he couldn't bear... I do believe he worked so hard to protect you this year because he felt that would make him and your father even. That way he could go back to hating your father in peace..."

"So he only tried to protect me because he owed my father?" Harriet felt as though she was going to be sick. Dumbledore shook his head.

"Professor Snape may not like your father, Harriet," Dumbledore said, "but he and your mother were good friends in school. Thus, his relationship with you is a bit more complicated than most."

"Professor Snape was really angry with me," Harriet whispered, "when Hermione and I snuck out of our dorm rooms a few days ago."

"I will not say that he wasn't angry with you, Harriet," he said softly, "but if you talk to him, you might be surprised as to why he was so disappointed with you."

"And sir, there's one more thing..."

"Just the one?" Dumbledore teased. Harriet blushed.

"How did I get the Stone out of the mirror?"

"Ah, now, I'm glad you asked me that. It was one of my more brilliant ideas, and between you and me, that's saying something. You see, only one who wanted to find the Stone — find it, but not use it — would be able to get it, otherwise they'd just see themselves making gold or drinking Elixir of Life. My brain surprises even me sometimes... Now, enough questions. I suggest that you wake up your parents. They were most worried about you. And your father and Sirius were very excited to help you get started on these delicious sweets."

Harriet reached over and carefully nudged her father, who was closest to her. He mumbled something incoherent, but didn't wake. She nudged him harder, shocking him out of his sleep. He sat up straight and looked around him, bewildered.

"Harriet," he said, sounding so relieved that Harriet wanted to cry. He spoke loud enough to wake up Harriet's mum, who looked just as relieved as he did. After a few minutes where she found herself being comforted by both her parents (during which Dumbledore graciously slid out the door), Harriet's father left and then returned with a Sirius and an exhausted, but happy, looking Remus.

As the hours past, they ate lunch and prodded Harriet, getting her to explain to them what had happened between her and Quirrel. She told them everything, leading up to the point where she had seen her grandparents in the mirror, when she stopped.

"Harriet?" asked her mum, gently. Harriet looked down and fingered the frayed edges of the blanket. "What is it?"

"I wanted-" Harriet tried. "I almost let him have- I thought he could bring them back!" Harriet gasped and she reached up and tried to wipe the tears from her cheek as best she could with her bandaged hand. Her father batted her hands away and did it for her.

"Oh, Harriet, love," said her mother gently. "Its alright. Its okay to miss them. I miss them, too!"

"But its my fault," Harriet denied, curling up into a ball, away from her mother's gentle caresses. "Voldemort said that grandmother gave her life for me. Its me he wanted. Its all my fault!"

"Harriet Potter," scolded her father, his tone somehow managing to be considerate and scolding at the same time. "We don't ever want to hear you say that again. It most certainly was not your fault. Your grandparents loved you very much and knew exactly what they were risking that night, but did it anyway. They gladly gave their lives for you, as would any of us in this room."

"But he was after me, wasn't he? Not after you two like Sirius said he was?" Her father and mother said nothing and Harriet recognized the look on their faces as the ones they got when they didn't want to lie to her, but they didn't want to tell her the truth either. Harriet prodded further, "Why was he after me?"

"Harriet," her mum sighed, "Your father and I promised never to lie to you, but we honestly can't answer this question. Not yet."

Harriet went to argue, but her father held up his hand. "When you're older." Harriet frowned, and then nodded.

"So what happened next, Prongslette?" Harriet jumped at the sound of Sirius's voice. He and Remus had been so quiet that she had almost forgotten they were there. Harriet went ahead and finished up the rest of her tale.

She was scolded, as she expected, but not too bad, as her parents were just very happy that she was alright. Her father and Sirius even assured her that they should be able to repair the damaged mirror.

Ron and Hermione also stopped by, letting Harriet introduce her friends to her parents officially. She had to explain the story to them as well, although there were all sorts of versions floating around the school. This happened to be one of the rare times where the truth was more shocking than the rumors.

Harriet managed to get a hold of Neville (well, Ron and Hermione dragged him to the hospital wing) and the three were able to explain the true nature of events several nights prior and, after he had been sworn to secrecy, he accepted their apologies and left smiling widely.

Madam Pomfrey eventually kicked them out, leaving Harriet and her family. They wanted to bring her home immediately, but she convinced them to let her stay until the end of term.

Professor Snape stopped by. He also gave her a long scolding, but by the end of it, she was smiling. He didn't need to say it, but whatever he was angry at her for, he had forgiven her. She might have brought it up under different circumstances, but she was just too happy to care.

Hogwarts Express-June 3, 1992

Harriet, Ron, and Hermione made themselves comfortable in their compartment. They didn't say anything as the train began to move, each lost in their own thoughts, watching Hogwarts grow smaller and smaller and smaller. Harriet frowned, knowing that, as happy as she was to be home, she was going to miss Hogwarts. Her thoughts were swimming.

After two weeks in the hospital wing, Madam Pomfrey had said, rather reluctantly, that Harriet could go. Harriet was relieved. After fourteen days of doing nothing but homework and staring at white-washed walls, she was excited for the end-of-year feast. Slytherin had won the house cup, but, in a surprising twist, Dumbledore had awarded Gryffindor enough house points that they had actually won.

Then, right before they had boarded the train home, Hagrid had come up to the three and begun sobbing about how everything was his fault, since he had let slip about Fluffy. It took some time, but they managed to assure him that it wasn't his fault and that they did not blame him in the slightest. He rewarded them with a large, bone-crushing hug.

"This year was nuts," sighed Ron, breaking the silence. Harriet snorted at the understatement. "My brothers always used to tell me these insane stories about their years at Hogwarts-"

"Well, now you can one-up them," Hermione said simply, not bothering to look up from her paper.

"What are you reading?" asked Ron, slightly peeved that she wasn't paying too much attention to him. She huffed, annoyed, and showed

them the front page article of the Daily Prophet, the wizarding newspaper.

"Fudge Denies You-Know-Who's Attempt To Return to Power." Hermione read, skimming the article. "Apparently, rumors haven't just been circulating in Hogwarts. Everybody else is talking about the Stone, too. In particular, the fact that Fudge knew nothing about it and that Mr. Flamel trusted Dumbledore over him. Fudge isn't happy... with Dumbledore or you, Harriet!"

"He can't do anything about it now, though," Harriet shrugged, unconcerned. "I'd like to see him try, anyways. I'm not going to let him ruin the first summer I have with my parents."

"You two will write, won't you?" Hermione asked anxiously, suddenly revealing how much she would miss her friends. Ron laughed.

"You know I won't," he told her. Hermione hit him with her rolled up newspaper.

"Harriet will," she announced, before turning to the aforementioned witch. "Won't you, Harriet?"

"Yea," Harriet said sarcastically, although she probably would end up writing them both very often, "every week." Hermione just shook her head and went back to her paper. Ron and Harriet exchanged grins. She went back to looking out the windows, watching the scenery roll by, then made a vow to herself.

I'm going to have a lot of fun this summer...

AN: Okay. Wow. I guess thats it. Harriet's first year. Thoughts? Comments? Anything you want to see in her second year? Let me know! I'm already working on the prologue for Harriet's second year, and it should be posted here in a few weeks (Maybe less. It depends on how long I make it. At the rate its going, its going to be a very short chapter, relatively speaking).

Who else is going to be on summer break soon? Hope you have a great break! Or maybe taking finals? Happy studying and good luck on those!



As always, thanks for all the interest you've shown this story (over 10,000 hits! You guys are amazing!)

Be on the look out for the first chapter of Harriet's second year: Harriet Potter Year 2: The Dreams of Yesterday.

See ya' on the flip-side! (I've always wanted to say that, for some reason.)

tinyrose65

## Harriet Potter Year 2: The Dreams of Yesterday

"The distinction between the past, present and future is only a stubbornly persistent illusion."

~Albert Einstein

Peter Pettigrew-June 5, 1992

Drip...

Drip...

Drip...

A nondescript, grey rat scuttled quickly through the storm drain, not letting the foul odor and general unpleasantness of his situation bother him. It would be over soon, he comforted himself. Provided, of course, that Lucius would help. If he didn't...No. He wasn't going to think about the implications.

It wasn't long before the rat emerged from the pipe, blinking in the bright sunlight of the afternoon. Hardly the sort of day for plotting, but the rat didn't really care about that. He had never been picky when it came to that sort of thing, unlike some of his friends ("friends" being used loosely).

He had a sudden flashback where he was romping with a large black dog, werewolf, and stag, in a large field, similar to the yard he found himself in now. He shook off the thought as he scurried into the spacious manor (making sure to avoid the sharp beaks of the peacocks). That part of his life was over.

It was time for a new beginning, which he hoped Lucius could provide. Since the demise of the Dark Lord, Death Eaters were hardly close and rarely kept in touch, so when Lucius had managed to contact him (he didn't even attempt to figure out how; Lucius's resources and influence were unsurpassed among pureblooded wizard families), he had naturally been a bit apprehensive.

But what choice did he have?

None.

Peter Pettigrew was at the end of his figurative rope.

Lucius Malfoy, Malfoy Manor-June 5, 1992

Tap...

Tap...

Tap...

Lucius Malfoy, who was currently waiting in his study and drumming his fingers on the hardwood table, was not a patient man. That being said, had it been under any other circumstances, he would not find himself nearly so inclined to wait for the rat, but, alas, his plan could not work without him. Shame.

He picked up the tattered diary and looked at with interest. Rather inauspicious, he never could have guessed the power held within its faded pages, had his old master not explained it to him before his untimely demise. Granted, the Dark Lord had not explained to him the mechanics of the enchantment, but few followers of the Dark Lord were privileged with that sort of information.

Previously, he had had no intention of actually using the diary. Rather, it had been a mere insurance policy: something to cash in on if his influence at the Ministry ever diminished. Which it was. He mentally cursed his cousin (by marriage, he comforted himself, not by blood) and those infernal raids. Unless he wished to lose all of the power he held at the Ministry, he needed to act quickly.

Lucius liked power, after all.

After some careful thinking, he decided now would be a good time to set his plan into motion. Lucius had his reservations that the diary would actually work, but, if he played his cards appropriately, he would be able to gain ten times the influence which he had held previously (at a fraction of the price) and discredit Dumbledore once and for all.

Fudge was on the warpath, furious had having been outwitted by Dumbledore and the old alchemist Flamel. Fudge would be happy to

use any means of discrediting the old coot regardless of how morally ambiguous.

If his master's plan actually worked...If he was able to return to life... the Dark Lord's take over would be made infinitely easier with Dumbledore discredited and Fudge (the oblivious idiot) feeling grateful towards him. His Master would be thankful.

But his grand plot was not without a few hitches. The first being that Hogwarts was well protected. There were few ways for him to be able to get the diary inside, and even fewer for the diary to be controlled and opened once inside the castle walls.

Thus, the rat become necessary. He shuddered at having to work with such a spineless, stupid, creature, but the rat had easy access to Hogwarts. He was also completely mindless and, considering the fact that every wall in Diagon Alley was plastered with his WANTED posters, he was also desperate for protection.

Protection that Lucius could provide.

He smirked. Yes, that part of the plan would work out well, assuming that the rat agreed. Which he would. He was nearly as power-hungry as Lucius himself, although infinitely more stupid.

The next part of his plan was a bit harder: he had to do nothing. he had to trust that his master's memory would know enough to be able to pull off his end. He scowled at the tattered page. Trust was not something that came easily to him... especially not of the Dark Lord.

He could wait, though, for a time. If all went well, he mused, Fudge would be crawling to him on his hands and knees and Dumbledore would look like a washed-out, outdated, incompetent Headmaster.

Dumbledore was not Lucius's only problem. There was also the small problem of Dumbledore's "golden girl": Harriet Potter. She had caused quite a stir since her return to the wizarding world, Malfoy sneered. His own son had written to him not a day into his arrival at Hogwarts to complain about her.

Not that Lucius blamed him: she was becoming a thorn in his side, as well. She had already shown herself to be persistent, curious, and stupidly brave. Cursing Gryffindor's and their surprising tenacity,

he knew he was going to need something else to keep her busy at the castle. Something rather dangerous.

Perhaps he could convince Fudge to put some things in motion...

A pop alerted him to the arrival of a house-elf. It looked at him with those annoyingly large eyes and rubbed its nose on the grubby pillowcase it wore. What was its name? Lucius frowned. Dumbly or Dippy or some other such nonsense?

"Dobby would like to inform you, Master Malfoy, that you have a visitor."

"And?" snapped Malfoy, not in the mood to be kind to his unpaid servant, "why didn't you show them in, you worthless piece of filth?" The elf's eyes filled with tears, but it resisted the urge to punish itself, dissapparating suddenly, then returning with his visitor, a short, beady eyed man who was looking around him cautiously.

"Peter," purred Lucius softly, gesturing with his arm for the uncomfortable man to take a seat. "Dobby," Lucius turned his eyes to his useless servant, who was anxiously tugging at its overly-large ears, "You are dismissed."

The elf gave an undignified squeak and left. Lucius could hear the banging coming from the other room as it punished itself, but paid it no mind. He turned his steely gaze on the frightened man and smirked at him.

This was going to be easy.

Dobby the House-elf, Malfoy Manor-June 5, 1992

Bang!

Bang!

Bang!

Dobby's head was spinning by the time he had finished hitting himself upside the head with the large book. He carefully placed the book back on the table and sniffed.

Dobby does not like being a slave, the elf thought mutinously. One day, Dobby will be free!

Dobby always had been a peculiar elf. He knew this. Or, at least, a part of him did. None of the other house-elves he met ever even thought of freedom. But he did. All the time. He imagined himself working for pay and not having to listen to Master Malfoy.

Dobby didn't want to listen to Master Malfoy. Master Malfoy was a bad man. He could hear him now, talking with his friend. Fragments of their conversation floated into the foyer, easily picked up by Dobby's large bat-like ears.

"...the Dark Lord's return..."

Dobby frowned. The Dark Lord was a bad man, too. Dobby remembered the days when he had wielded power. They had not been pleasant times for house-elves.

"...Tom Riddle?"

"The Dark Lord's given name. If we can manage to get past the protections at Hogwarts..."

Dobby squeaked in fright. Whoever this visitor was, they were going to try and breach the protections at Hogwarts. Dobby had friends at Hogwarts, other house-elves who were both safe and happy. Dobby knew of Dumbledore's powers, but from what he knew of his master (and he knew a surprising amount), the magic being used was of the sort that no decent wizard would ever dream of using.

"Harriet Potter is a problem..."

"...get rid of.."

Dobby's ears perked up at the mention of Harriet Potter. He had heard of her, of course. There were few among the wizarding world who did not know her name. Her tale was legend. His master was plotting to hurt Harriet Potter, Dobby frowned. Dobby had never had the honor of meeting Harriet Potter personally, but from what he had heard of other house-elves, she was a brave and noble sort.

Of course, what he had heard from his young Master Malfoy, Harriet Potter was very bad, indeed. He had ranted, when he had first come home for Christmas, that Harriet Potter was "proud and arrogant" and that "the little tart things everybody should worship her all because of a funny birthmark!"

Dobby had "accidentally" dropped one of Master Malfoy's books on his foot for that remark. He had to throw himself off of the top of the stairs for it, but it had been worth it.

Dobby refused to believe anything that the Masters Malfoy said about Harriet Potter. It was not true. It couldn't be true. She had saved them all from one of the darkest wizards in existence. Now, though, his Master, and a wizard whom he could not identify, were plotting to kill Harriet Potter. He was not going to let them. He couldn't let them.

Harriet Potter had saved his life, whether she had known it or not. Now, Dobby decided, with a determined flap of his ears, it was his turn to save her.

"Dobby!" came young Master Draco's voice from his bedroom, "My room needs cleaning!"

Dobby grimaced. First, he must go clean Master Draco's room.

Then he was going to save Harriet Potter.

I feel kind of bad giving you all such a short chapter, but, like I said before, I never really intended for this to be particularly long. I'm already working on the first chapter, so hopefully that will be up soon.

What do you guys think? Year 2 look interesting? And what do you think about how I did Dobby? I wasn't too sure about him, since I wasn't too sure about how a house-elf thinks (especially as peculiar an elf as Dobby).

I feel really excited about Harriet's second year. Partially because, if it works out the way I hope, the Golden Trio is in for a very interesting time. However, I'm also excited because I never really thought I would get this far with this story. It started out as nothing more than some stray thoughts running around my head...and now look at it!

I appreciate everything. From the quick notes telling me how much you enjoy the story, to the long reviews filled with advice, to the subscriptions and the favorites.

Okay. I'll stop. At this rate, the note will be longer than the chapter! Sorry! It just kinda hit me as I was putting this up!

As always, enjoy!

tinyrose65



Harriet Potter, Dumbledore's Office-June 9, 1992

Harriet stared at Dumbledore, not understanding. He didn't seem to mind, though, instead, he simply took another candy from his bowl and waited for her thoughts to catch up with her. She stole a glance at her parents, who seemed as incredulous as she did.

"A trial?" Harriet finally repeated. Dumbledore nodded and Harriet's voice grew more hysterical. "Fudge wants to charge me for trying to steal the Stone and hold a trial?" It made absolutely no sense.

"Yes," Dumbledore said quietly, obviously not knowing how else to reassure her.

"But surely Fudge knows that it was Quirrel who attempted to try and steal the Stone?" scowled her father, while her mother stroked her hair to try and comfort her. "Quirrel was there! In the chamber!"

"Harriet's story relies on the fact that Voldemort was attempting to return to power," Dumbledore sighed. "Fudge refuses to believe that. He much rather think that Harriet herself was attempting to retrieve the Stone and, when he tried to stop her, murdered Quirrel-"

"Wait, what?" Harriet squawked. It was one thing to be accused of trying to steal the Stone, but it was another entirely to be accused of murder. "I'm not even twelve!" she gaped at Dumbledore. Was Fudge really that stupid?

"I'm not too sure yet how Fudge will mount his defense," Dumbledore admitted, "However, I can assure you, everything will work out. Amelia Bones-"

"Susan's aunt?" Harriet asked, surprised. She had seen the woman only once on the platform and had to admit that she looked to be a very intimidating woman.

"The very same," agreed Dumbledore. "As intimidating as she may seem, she is nothing if not fair. Regardless of Fudge's motives, she will hear you out completely. Do not forget, as well, that I, along with your parents and Mr. Black and Mr. Lupin, will be on hand, along with any other witnesses Fudge may call."

Harriet made a noncommittal sound in the back of her throat. She could feel the butterflies in her stomach already come to life. "When is the trial?"

"Fudge has called it for next week." Harriet winced and Dumbledore looked at her over his glasses, his eyes sad. "I am sorry, Harriet."

"Its not your fault, sir," Harriet sniffed, rubbing her nose with the back of her sleeve. Dumbledore gave her a soft smile, but said nothing. Harriet and her parents took that as a dismissal, leaving through the Floo without another word.

Harriet Potter, Potter Manor-June 13, 1992

The trial is tomorrow. The trial is tomorrow. Harriet was at a loss to think anything else. She turned over on her bed so that she was laying on her side, allowing her to see the sandwich and glass of water that her mother had placed on her bedside table in an attempt to get her to eat. She wanted to eat (Lord knows, she was starving), but even the thought of food made her stomach churn and her body break out in a cold sweat.

Harriet had been in her bed almost all day, leaving only once to shower, before returning immediately. In addition to her mother, her father had Remus had also stopped by to cheer her up. Sirius, when realizing that she wasn't going to leave her room anytime soon, had transformed and now lay as Padfoot at the foot of her bed.

"Harriet!" It was her mother. "Can you come downstairs? Somebody is here to see you!" Harriet raised an eyebrow and sat up, stretching her stiff muscles. She was extremely curious as to who was visiting her. She wasn't expecting anybody. She turned to Sirius, who had his head up and had perked his ears.

"Do you know who is coming?" she asked him. He shook his head and hopped of the bed, trotting into the hallway. Harriet frowned and followed his path out the door, finding him as a man once again, smoothing out some wrinkles in his clothes. He smiled at her when he noticed that she was out of bed.

He a made a huge show of bowing and offering her his arm. "Shall we, Lady Prongslette?" She resisted the urge to laugh and played along.

"We shall, Sir Padfoot," she couldn't keep her laughter in and let out a few giggles. Sirius pouted at her, making her laugh even more. He lead her to the top of the stairs before letting go of her and dashing downstairs.

"Race ya!" he called over his shoulder. Harriet scowled.

"No fair," she called after him, trying to catch up. "You had a head start!"

She skidding, laughing, into the living room, where Sirius was already waiting for her, smirking triumphantly. She tried to glare at him, but she was too out of breath to say anything at the moment.

"Glad to see you are having so much fun without me," teased a voice. Harriet started then grinned wildly when she realized who the "visitor" was.

"Hermione!" Harriet ran to embrace her friend hugging her fiercely and Hermione was just as enthusiastic. "What are you doing here!"

"Fudge has called me to be a witness in your trial tomorrow," Hermione said carefully, not sure how Harriet would react. Harriet mouthed a silent "oh." Hermione went on. "I didn't really have a way to get the Ministry, so you're parents were kind enough to invite me over for the night." Harriet smiled at her parents, knowing that it wasn't the only reason they had invited Hermione over.

"You don't need to worry, Harriet," Hermione babbled suddenly. "I've been reading up on the wizarding law and there is no way that they could sentence you to anything more than a few years!" Hermione's eyes widened and she rambled on even more. "Not they would probably convict you at all. As angry as Fudge is, its the Wizengamot that makes the final decision and Dumbledore has been the head of them for a long time so he has a lot of influence! Although, you didn't do anything wrong, so even if he didn't exert any of it, I'm sure you-"

"Hermione!" Harriet cut in, staring at her friend with wide eyes. Hermione stopped talking and took a deep breath, her face flushed from talking so fast. Harriet could hear Sirius laughing behind her, but she ignored it. Again, she wrapped her arms around Hermione

for a large hug. "Thank you," she told her friend quietly. She didn't need to say what for. Hermione understood completely.

She simply mumbled a shy, "You're welcome."

For the first time, Harriet fully appreciated Hermione and her friendship. That wasn't to say that she hadn't enjoyed Hermione's companionship before, but she wouldn't deny the fact that she had much rather spend time with Ron, who shared a similar sense of humor, love of Quidditch, and disdain for schoolwork. Not to mention the fact that he had been her first real friend (not counting Isaura, but she was a snake, so that made their relationship just a tad more complicated).

But now, sitting cross-legged on the floor in her bedroom with Hermione, a bucket of popcorn between them, doing each other's nails and sharing laughs, Harriet finally understood what it meant to have a real girl-friend.

Right now, she wasn't "Harriet Potter: The-Girl Who Lived" or "Harriet Potter: The Freak in the Cupboard." She was just Harriet, which was who she had wanted to be her entire life.

Harriet scowled and threw popcorn at a particularly teasing comment from Hermione, who retaliated in the same manner. Within a few minutes, the entire room was covered in kernels, each of the girls laughing on the floor, tears streaming down their faces.

"Whats going on-" Harriet's father had stuck his head threw the door to see what all the noise was about, only to find himself hit in the face with a handful of popcorn, courtesy of Hermione.

Hermione sat up, aghast. "I'm sorry, Mr. Potter!"

Harriet's father, however, just chuckled and stepped a bit further into the room. "I'm sorry, too, Hermione," he told her gravely, plucking some of the popcorn off his shirt. He chuckled them at her, who squealed and threw her hands up to protect herself. "You're aim is awful!"

Harriet laughed and Hermione scowled, mumbling something about how her aim was perfect.

"Ah," came Sirius's voice. Sirius had stuck his head into the room as well and smirked at his friend. "Here you are." He took in the girls and the TweenWitch Monthly between them and grinned. "I know what you're thinking, James, but no tip from a magazine is going to get your hair to lie flat!"

Sirius was gone for the room quick as a flash, with James hot on his heels. Harriet and Hermione couldn't see what happened after that, but a resounding crash and a high yelp from Sirius assure them that Harriet's father had gotten his revenge.

"Your family is mental," Hermione told her friend tactlessly. "Now I know where you get it."

Harriet stuck out her tongue, then Hermione said, "Give me your other foot," she ordered, "unless you want to appear in front of the whole of Wizengamot with uneven toenails." Harriet quieted. In all the fun, she had forgotten why she had been so anxious in the first place.

"Harriet," Hermione sighed. Harriet didn't let her finish though.

"Are they really going to try me in front of the entire Wizengamot?" Hermione didn't say anything for a moment and Harriet worried that she was never going to answer.

"I don't know," her friend admitted quietly after a moment. Harriet wouldn't leave it at that.

"But your best guess?" Harriet begged. Hermione sighed.

"Fudge isn't happy," she told her friend quietly, "and he's trying to pin you for theft and murder. I wouldn't be surprised."

Harriet felt the pure desperation grow in her chest. "Why?" she demanded. "Why can't he just leave me alone? Dumbledore said that Fudge just doesn't want to admit that Voldemort-" Hermione flinched. "-tried to come back, but then why not say that Quirrel tried to steal the Stone to use it for himself!"

Hermione shook her head. "I don't know," she said carefully, "but remember, Harriet, these past few months haven't been easy on Fudge. Sirius was released from Azkaban as a free man and

revealed that he never got a trial. Nicolas Flamel, a highly respected wizard, trusted Dumbledore to guard one of the most precious artifacts in the history of magic, all under Fudge's nose! He's embarrassed and I suppose that this is his way of trying to save some face. If he can prove that you really tried to steal the Stone, it would make Dumbledore look like an incompetent old man and an unworthy headmaster for almost being outwitted by an eleven year old girl."

Harriet blinked. "That's the worst logic I've ever heard of."

Hermione snorted. "Nobody said that Fudge was voted into office because of his brains."

Harriet's lips twitched upwards and Hermione did her best not to let her laughter escape. When their eyes met though, neither was able to hold in their near hysterical giggles.

Harriet Potter, Ministry of Magic-June 10, 1992

Despite her anxiousness, Harriet couldn't help but notice that the Ministry of Magic was one of the most amazing places she had ever seen, not counting Hogwarts. She stole a glance at Ron and Hermione, both of whom were dressed up in their smartest robes. Judging by their glazed over eyes and their open jaws, they were thinking the same thing.

They were walking down a large, glistening hallway with hardwood floors. If it weren't for her father's hand on her back, Harriet most likely would have walked into something, as she couldn't keep her eyes off of the bright-blue ceiling covered in golden, swirling, ever-changing symbols, which moved as though in some sort of dance to which only they knew the choreography of. She vaguely wondered what they translated into, but, truthfully, she was far too dumbstruck to remember to ask.

Hermione, on the other hand, seemed focused on something else: a fountain. The fountain was located about half-way down the hall. A group of golden statues, larger than life-size, stood in the middle of a circular pool. Tallest of them all was a noble-looking wizard with his wand pointing straight up in the air. Grouped around him were a beautiful witch, a centaur, a goblin and an odd looking creature with large, bat-like ears.. The last three were all looking adoringly up at

the witch and wizard. Glittering jets of water were flying from the ends of their wands, the point of the centaur's arrow, the tip of the goblins hat and each of the small creature's ears, so that the tinkling hiss of falling water was added to the pops and cracks of the Apparators and the clatter of footsteps as hundreds of witches and wizards, most of whom were wearing glum, early-morning looks, strode towards a set of golden gates at the far end of the hall.

"What is that?" Hermione screeched, coming to a complete standstill in front of the figure. Harriet and Ron exchanged glances, recognizing the beginning of a patented "Hermione Rant."

"A fountain?" Ron asked weakly. Hermione gave him a glare, making him recoil.

"I know that, Ronald," she hissed. "I meant what was on the fountain! Its deplorable! The way they depict the wizards to be so superior and make the centaur and the- the- the-" she waved her hand to signify the house-elf and Sirius, realizing that Hermione did not know what the small creature was, supplied it for her.

"A house-elf," he offered. Hermione scowled.

"Right! The house-elf-" Hermione stopped short and looked at Sirius curiously. "Whats a house-elf?"

"A house-elf is a magical creature which is devoted and loyal to the one designated as their master. They serve wizards and witches, and must do everything that is ordered of them, often punishing themselves when they dissatisfy their master." Harriet's mum recited this in a manner that was so similar to Hermione that Harriet looked between the two of them rapidly.

She then turned back to the statue. She had heard of house-elves, of course, but she had yet to ever see one. She frowned at the worshipful look on the elf's face. She hoped that not all house-elves looked like that.

"Come on," said Remus gently, ushering the children forward. "We don't want to be late-"

"Where are we even going?" Harriet asked curiously. For all her worry about the trial, she hadn't even begin to wonder about where it

would be held. Remus raised an eyebrow in slight rebuke of her interruption, so she offered a mumbled apology.

"We are meeting Kingsley Shacklebolt," Remus said. "He'll be taking us to the courtroom." Harriet nodded, feeling a bit better, remembering Auror Shacklebolt calm demeanor and large smile. They met up with him by one of the lifts. He greeted them all with a strained smile, saving Harriet for last.

"Ah, Harriet Potter," he said, offering her his hand, "we meet again. I am sorry that it had be under these circumstances."

"So am I," she muttered to herself, before shaking his hand and thanking him for his kind words. He released her and guided the group away from the stream of visitors towards a set of golden gates. Instead of going through them, Auror Shacklebolt led them to small desk at the side labeled Security.

"Hello, Eric," Auror Shacklebolt greeted the wizard in peacock blue robes. "I have some visitors."

"All of them?" said Eric, sounding highly dismayed at all of the people and the extra work. Auror Shacklebolt just chuckled, amused.

"No, not all of them." Eric sighed, relieved. Harriet, Ron, Hermione, Lily, and Remus all stepped forward and Eric scowled again, looking sourly at the auror. Harriet watched as Remus, the first to move forward. Eric held up a thin golden rod and passed it up and down Remus's back.

"Wand," grunted Eric and Remus cheerfully handed the grumpy wizard his wand.

The wizard dropped it on to a strange brass instrument, which looked something like a set of scales with only one dish. It began to vibrate. A narrow strip of parchment came speeding out of a slit in the base. The wizard tore this off and read the writing on it, which was a set of statistics about Remus's wand.

"Yes," said Remus surely, "All correct."

"I keep this," said the wizard, impaling the slip of parchment on a small brass spike. "You get this back," he added, handing the wand



back Remus. The rest of the group passed through security, until only Harriet was left. Eric handed her back her wand after the scan.

"Thank you," she said quietly.

"Hang on..." Eric said slowly, sitting up and looking at Harriet curiously. His eyes had darted from the silver visitors badge on Harriet's chest to her forehead.

"Thank you, Eric," said her father firmly as Sirius took her by the shoulder and lead her away from the desk and through the gates with the others. Somehow, Auror Shacklebolt managed to maneuver the group through the crowd and into a slightly smaller hallway that was lined with lifts, all guarded by golden grilles.

As they waited in line for a chance on the lifts, several wizards greeted the three aurors and quite a few stared at Harriet's scar. Ron and Hermione, sensing their stares, moved around Harriet, as they often did at Hogwarts, their slightly taller forms doing a pretty good job of blocking the looks.

She shot them each a grateful smile, then frowned.

"Mr. Shacklebolt," she said, trying to call over the hum of the voices. Kingsley shook his head.

"Just a moment Harriet," he said, suddenly disappearing through the crowd of people. For a moment Harriet wondered if he had left them, but a moment later, he appeared, gesturing for them to follow. They did and found themselves ushered into the lift that he had just managed to procure.

"There," he sighed, pressing a button as the doors closed. Harriet felt the lift move upward. "Now, what were you wanting to ask, Harriet?"

"I was wondering, Mr. Shacklebolt-"

"Kingsley," Auror Shacklebolt interrupted. Harriet nodded, surprised.

"Alright, Kingsley," she said carefully. He smiled at her in encouragement, so she decided to continue. "Where exactly are we going?"

"Courtroom Ten," Kingsley said quietly. Harriet, seeing the looks on the adults's faces turned back to Kingsley, nervous.

"Whats wrong with Courtroom Ten?"

"Nothing is wrong with it, Prongslette," explained Sirius from the back of the lift. Harriet turned around to get a better look at him. "Courtroom Ten was one of the old courtrooms used after the war to interrogate Death Eaters."

Harriet took in a deep breath and Kingsley reassured her. "Do not worry, Harriet. The methods that were used to interrogate Death Eaters will be nothing at all like how this trial will work. Courtroom Ten was probably chosen due to its size. It's very big."

"Will a lot of people be there?" Hermione piped up. Kingsley took a deep breath.

"Yes," he said carefully watching Harriet for a reaction. When it was clear that she was not about to break down crying, he continued. "The whole of Wizengamot will be there," Harriet raised an eyebrow at Hermione, whose lips were pursed in a thin line, "along with many witnesses and several reporters."

"Witnesses?" Harriet asked, surprised. She had known that was why Hermione and Ron were here, but she had assumed that they would be it. Kingsley nodded.

"Fudge has summoned about a dozen witnesses forth to either to attest to your character or attempt to determine what truly happened that night."

"How long is this going to take?" It was Ron who asked.

"A good portion of the day," Kingsley admitted, making Harriet's jaw drop.

"What about food!" demanded Ron, indignant. Harriet and Hermione snorted as Kingsley explained to Ron that there would be short breaks for meals. Suddenly, an automated voice called over the lift.

"The Atrium." Harriet took a deep breath as the group was lead outside and down the hall. This particular corridor was both dark and musty, reminding Harriet strongly of the dungeons at Hogwarts. At the end, they met an old witch by a large, grimy door.

"Augusta!" exclaimed Harriet's mum, sounding shocked. Harriet blinked, having suddenly recognized the woman as Neville's grandmother. She was dressed quite a bit differently (in smart, black robes) since the last time Harriet had seen her on the train platform

"I needed to bring Neville here," she explained sharply. Harriet blanched: she hadn't realized that other friends from school were here. Who else? Mrs. Longbottom continued. "I also came to offer my services," she said simply. Harriet frowned and Remus, seeing her frown (and those of Ron and Hermione), leant down to explain.

"Mrs. Longbottom used to be an attorney here in the wizarding world. She was quite good, but went into retirement years ago."

Harriet nodded and looked at her father and mother who were talking quietly with Mrs. Longbottom and Kingsley. Finally, Harriet could see that an agreement had been reached.

"Thank you, Augusta," Harriet's mum said. Apparently, Mrs. Longbottom was going to be representing her. Harriet's father looked at her concerned.

"Are you ready, Prongslette?" Harriet nodded quickly, knowing that if she thought about what was about to happen, she would probably throw up. Kingsley opened the doors to Courtroom Ten and they were all lead inside.

Harriet Potter, Courtroom Ten- June 10, 1992

Harriet had to bite back a gasp as she entered the courtroom and saw it for the first time. The room was large and round, with a high ceiling and grimy walls that reminded her of the Hogwarts dungeons. The center of the room was bare (save for a single chair), but the rest of the room was lined with rows and rows of benches, most filled with shadowy-figures and blurred shapes.

The most prominent seats were situated directly across from the door. Harriet recognized Fudge from his picture in the paper. He

was a short, balding man, whose mouth was currently set in a tight frown. Next to him, Harriet could make out the familiar, monocled form of Amelia Bones. Neville's grandmother had taken her seat next to them. There were a young man also there (just out of school, Harriet guessed), a quill in his hand and ready to write.

Harriet felt her mother's hand nudge shoulder and let herself be lead to a row of benches off to the side of the room. Her eyes having adjusted to the dim lighting provided by the torches, she could make out the familiar shapes of others, including Neville, Madam Pomfrey, and Snape.

She settled down between her parents, with Sirius and Remus to the left next to her father, and Ron and Hermione to the right of her mother. After a few more minutes, where everybody seemed to settle down, an unnatural hush fell over the courtroom as Fudge stood up.

He cleared his throat. "Yes," he muttered, before speaking up a bit, "Well. The Wizengamot has been gathered here today to hear the case of Miss Harriet Lily Potter, who has been accused of the attempted theft of an ancient magical artifact-the Philosopher's Stone-and the murder of Professor Quirinus Quirrell. Testimony will be heard from about a dozen witness from each side, at which point Wizengamot will make a decision as to Miss Potter's innocence or guilt. Let the record show that this trial has officially begun.

Fudge sat down and Amelia Bones called the first witness.

"Healer Bernard Barkleberry."

Bernard Barkleberry, Courtroom Ten- June 10, 1992

Harriet bit her lip as the older gentleman carefully made his way to the chair in the center of the room. The chains attached to it shuddered ominously, as if contemplating whether or not he needed to be restrained, before stilling, obviously deciding that he was no threat. The man visibly let out a sigh of relief.

"Please state your name," Madam Bones said firmly. The man fiddled with his collar, sweat beading on his brow.

"Bernard Barkleberry," he said, his voice choking a bit over the last syllable. Amelia Bones raised an eyebrow at him.

"And what is it that you do?"

"I'm a healer," he said, as if unsure of it himself. He placed his hands back in his lap and fiddled with them nervously. "I work at St. Mungo's. In the mental ward."

"Right," Madam Bones nodded, glancing down at a piece of paper. "You have been summoned here today to give your professional opinion on the effects of the Killing Curse on a person's mental health."

From the stands, Harriet almost made to stand up, indignant. That was their defense? That the Killing Curse had somehow made her insane? Harriet wasn't sure whether she should laugh or cry. She decided that both would be appropriate in this situation.

"Yes," Healer Barkleberry affirmed. He sounded a bit more confident at this point.

"And what is your professional opinion?" asked Fudge eagerly. Madam Bones gave him a warning glare, silencing him. Barkleberry watched the exchange for a moment, before clearing his throat in an attempt to get rid of the tension.

"My professional opinion," he began carefully, as though he were waiting for Madam Bones to glare at him, "is that it is entirely possible-even likely-that the Killing Curse has had some sort of adverse effect on Miss Potter's mental state."

"Right," said Augusta Longbottom drily, "and you know this because we have so many other survivors of the Killing Curse from whom you can draw your conclusions."

Barkleberry stuttered as Madam Bones tutted a warning to Mrs. Longbottom. "Now hang on," he argued. "Just because we may not have a case such as Miss Potter's, does not mean that my conclusion is any less sound!"

"And what makes you say that, Healer Barkleberry?" asked Madam Bones, coolly.

"Well," he began, "all we truly need to do is look at other examples of the effects of Unforgivables on wizards and witches. The Imperius Curse, for instance, can do great damage to the minds of its victims, especially at the hands of a very strong wizard."

"And not to mention the Cruciatus Curse," said Fudge bitingly. He gave Mrs. Longbottom a scolding look. "But I am sure you would know all about the effects of that particular curse."

Mrs. Longbottom drew herself upwards, obviously stung by his comment, the reasons for which Harriet did not understand. The courtroom filled with angry hisses (including some from her parents) and even Snape seemed to think that Fudge's words had gone too far.

"Thank-you for your testimony, Healer Barkleberry." Madam Bones spoke sharply. "You may step down. Madam Pomfrey, if you would please approach?"

Madam Pomfrey, Courtroom 10- June 10, 1992

"My name is Madam Poppy Pomfrey," the older woman said confidently. "I have been running the Hogwarts hospital wing for over twenty years."

Madam Bones gave her first true smile of the day, apparently familiar with the healer from her own days at Hogwarts.

"Madam Pomfrey," she began calmly, "You are called here to testify regarding Harriet Potter's mental state. You examined Miss Potter the day her parents went to retrieve her from her relatives, correct?"

"Yes," she said simply. Madam Bones nodded firmly then looked back down to the paper in front of her. "And what did you find?"

Harriet felt her heart skip a beat. Madam Pomfrey wouldn't be able to tell them what her scans had revealed, right? She might not have known much about how medical scans worked, but somebody as thorough as Madam Pomfrey couldn't have missed the sure signs of evidence of the Dursley's treatment of her.

"That information is protected by doctor-patient confidentiality." Madam Pomfrey answered. Harriet let out a deep breath she hadn't even realized that she had been holding. She felt her mother give her hand a light squeeze of comfort.

"We have received special permission from the Wizengamot to override such confidentiality," Fudge told her triumphantly.

"Only for information that is relevant to the current case!" Madam Pomfrey chided fiercely.

"You are correct, Madam Pomfrey," said Madam Bones, interjecting. "Let me rephrase my question. We have just heard testimony from Healer Barkleberry regarding the possibility of the after effects suffered by Miss Potter due to the Killing Curse. Did you find anything in your examination pointing to anything of the sort?"

"No," Madam Pomfrey informed her. "Miss Potter showed no signs of any mental damage or derangement. She was one of the most cooperative patients I've had in awhile. So polite!"

Harriet turned bright red as more than a few of the heads in the room turned toward her, some of the faces wearing small smiles.

"How did you know what to test for?" Fudge pointed out gleefully. "We've never had another survivor of the Killing Curse." Madam Pomfrey shot her the stern glare that had quieted braver men than Fudge.

Harriet wondered if Madam Pomfrey had also noticed that Fudge was contradicting himself regarding the reliability of using the other Unforgivables as a mark for the effects of the Killing Curse.

"I tested using the same standard as I do for the other Unforgivables," she told him sternly. "I also tested for any abnormalities, psychologically speaking. There were none."

Madam Bones nodded and Fudge scowled further. Madam Bones dismissed the healer and called for the next witness.

"Neville Longbottom," Madam Bones called. "Please approach."

Neville Longbottom, Courtroom 10- June 10, 1992

"M-my name is N-Neville Longbottom," Neville stammered, looking incredibly flustered by all of the eyes on him. Harriet tried to catch his eye and give him a reassuring smile, but it didn't seem to help much.

"Mr. Longbottom," began Madam Bones, "we have called you here to help shed a bit more light on Miss Potter's character." She smiled kindly at him. "We are just going to ask you a few questions, alright?"

Neville nodded slowly.

"Alright. When did you meet and Miss Potter first meet?"

"We first met on the Hogwarts Express," Neville offered. Madam Bones nodded for him to continue. "I didn't talk to her for very long-didn't even know her name. I was just looking for Trevor, my toad. I asked her and Ron-er, Ron Weasley, who was there, too-if they had seen him. They said they hadn't, so I left."

"I see." Madam Bones nodded. "But you got to know her a bit better in instances after that, correct?"

"We were sorted into the same house," Neville offered, "and we had some classes together. She-" he paused for a moment, his nerves seeming to catch up with him. "She offered to partner with me in Potions...It's not really my best subject, you see?" He told Madam Bones with a sheepish smile. Snape gave a snort of amusement, which Madam Bones thankfully pretended not to notice.

"I felt bad about her having to put up with me, so I told her I'd help her in Herbology."

Madam Bones nodded. "And this academic partnership is the extent of your relationship with Miss Potter?"

"Well," Neville said, "we see each other in the common room and stuff. Harriet's always been really nice to me. She stands up for me when other people make fun of me, and is always trying to boost my confidence and stuff..." Neville trailed off, blushing brightly (although not nearly as red as Harriet was turning).



"Tell us about the dragon incident," Madam Bones said gently. Neville frowned for a moment, not seeming to understand her. Recollection dawned on his face after a moment.

"Oh," he said, suddenly more nervous. Harriet felt her heart speed up. Neville had promised to keep the true nature of "the dragon incident" a secret, but did that extend to court? Hopefully it did. The last thing she needed was adding illegal dragon smuggling to her already growing list of charges.

"That was just a misunderstanding," Neville muttered, seeming to try and sink into his chair.

"Can you clarify?"

"Sure," he said. He didn't say anything for a minute though, seemingly lost in thought. Madam Bones and Neville's grandmother both seemed rather patient, but Fudge looked about ready to burst.

Wait another minute, Neville, she silently urged. If Fudge blows up, all my problems will be gone!"

"Harriet never got along with Malfoy-ah, Draco, sorry." Neville began, stumbling. "House rivalries and all," he smiled weakly. "They were always bickering and trying to outdo each other and that-that sort of thing." Harriet felt a surge of gratitude towards Neville. He was trying to tell their made up tale and still shed her in as flattering a light as possible.

"Malfoy had already tried tricking Harriet and Ron into leaving the dorm after curfew," here, Neville shot Harriet an apologetic look, knowing that the crime they had managed to get away clean with had now been aired out to dry, "so Harriet and Ron and Hermione thought that it might be a good idea to try and get even. That's when they came up with a story about an illegal dragon."

"And Mister Draco Malfoy believed it?" Madam Bones pressed. Neville nodded eagerly.

"Yea, he did. Their plan worked, but a little too well." Neville let out a weak chuckle and began to play with his hands. "I b-believed the story, too. I-I overheard Malfoy talking about getting Harriet and her friends in trouble, s-so I tried to track them down and stop them."

"That's when you all got caught," Madam Bones finished, leaning down to scribble something in her notes, frown on her face.

"It wasn't Harriet's fault, though!" Neville protested, suddenly sounding more confident than he ever had before. Harriet suddenly realized that Neville, although a bit bumbling and clueless at times, was a good friend. "She didn't mean for any of us—even Malfoy—to get into that much trouble!"

"And even after that incident," demanded Fudge, "you still believe Harriet Potter to be your friend?"

Harriet winced.

"Yea," Neville said quietly. Harriet took a deep breath in and managed to exchange gleeful looks with Ron and Hermione. "I was really hurt, at first. Then Ron and Hermione dragged me down to the hospital wing and they all explained to me what had happened. I know I'm not as close to any of them as they are to each other, but...yea. I still think Harriet is my friend. Ron and Hermione, too."

Harriet was almost jumping up and down in her seat at this point. Only her father's hand on her shoulder kept her still. Ron had a huge grin on his face, as well, and Hermione looked both very smug and very pleased.

Fudge, on the other hand, looked sour. Madam Bones thanked Neville and dismissed him. When she called the next witness, Fudge looked infinitely more hopeful.

"Draco Malfoy, please approach."

Draco Malfoy, Courtroom 10- June 10, 1992

"She's absolutely awful!"

Those were Draco's first words as he took a seat in the center of the courtroom. Harriet resisted the urge to hex him (that is, if she could actually learn how; they hadn't gotten that far in Defense).

"You mean Miss Potter?" Madam Bones questioned, after taking a moment to recover from his outburst. Draco nodded fervently.

"Please, Mister Malfoy," Fudge implored, failing in his attempt to not sound too eager, "Tell us more!"

Draco seemed all too eager to oblige. He began listing all of her faults: from her bragging, to her attention-seeking ways, to all of the special treatment she enjoyed. His testimony might have been somewhat useful to Fudge, had Malfoy not made a mistake.

"She smuggled in that illegal dragon, too!"

Harriet could almost hear Fudge cursing Malfoy out in his mind.

"The illegal dragon?" said Madam Bones, amused. "Are you referring to the prank pulled by Miss Potter and her friends?"

Draco gaped like a fish. "It wasn't a prank! There was an actual dragon!" He protested loudly.

Harriet heard some tittering from the crowd, and she resisted the urge to giggle herself. Malfoy looked like an indignant puppy. "It's true!"

"Mister Malfoy, a ministry investigation has already established that there was no dragon."

"But-"

"Enough!" Madam Bones said sharply. Malfoy was silent. "These proceedings will take long enough without you sprouting this drivel for the court to hear. That's enough. You are dismissed."

Still grumbling about the fact that there was a real dragon, and that no he hadn't been imagining things, Malfoy hopped off of his seat and shot Harriet the meanest glare he could muster. Harriet scowled back.

Harriet Potter, Courtroom 10-June 10, 1992

The interrogations continued in this manner for the rest of the day. After Malfoy, Madam Bones called Remus to the stand, followed by Sirius. At first, Fudge seemed determined to bring in Remus's

lycanthropy and Sirius's jail record, but Madam Bones quickly put a stop to his line of thought. According to Madam Bones, they were both being questioned to learn more about Harriet's character, not to unearth skeletons from their closets.

(No guesses there about how they testified.)

Sirius left the stands, glaring quite harshly at Fudge. Next, Harriet's parents were called collectively to the stand. Madam Hooch first told them how happy she had been when she heard that they were awake. Then, they were both asked to confirm that Harriet had written to them about her search for the Stone

("She didn't know what it was when she was looking for it!" They had protested.)

Harriet was worried when Snape was called up to the stands-he was supposed to act like he hated her, after all. She was stupid to be so anxious. Snape played his part brilliantly. He made sure to emphasize the fact he could not stand her, but that she was "far too incapable of pulling off such a heinous crime." He also added that, although he thought her to be an "obnoxious, spoiled, little girl," she was "not nearly as lazy or arrogant as her father and his band of troublemaking idiots."

(Harriet got the impression that he was enjoying this far too much.)

McGonnagal came next, offering her explanation of the events that had lead up to the theft of the Stone, beginning with the point in time when Harriet, Ron, and Hermione had run up to her in the hall and informed her that somebody was trying to steal the Stone.

("If only I had taken them seriously," McGonnagal had lamented as she went to take her seat in the stands once again.)

Dumbledore's testimony considered mostly of his agreement with Nicholas Flamel, confirmation that he had received an urgent letter from the Ministry requiring his immediate presence, and a statement that only somebody who wanted the Stone-but not to use it- could have taken it from the mirror.

(His eyes never stopped twinkling. Harriet wondered how he did that.)

As Harriet had expected, Hermione's testimony was filled with facts and detail-a typical Hermione response to everything. This might have been a sign of grace under pressure, but Harriet knew better. When Hermione was nervous, she had a tendency to overanalyze everything.

("Really this trial is completely ridiculous. Under the precedent set by Mulligan vs. The Wizengamot in 1927-" Harriet tuned her out after that.)

Ron's testimony outlined the same events as Hermione, with less detail. Unlike Harriet's other friend, he had a tendency to stumble over his words more, but, other than that, his story never changed.

("We did try to go to a teacher! We went to Professor McGonnagal! Then we tried Headmaster Dumbledore-no wait, we tried to go to Dumbledore first. Then, after Harriet was taken, we went to Snape-I mean, Professor Snape.")

Finally, it was Harriet's turn.

"Harriet Lily Potter," she said, her voice wavering just a tad as she gave her name for the court. She prayed that nobody noticed (at least, if they did, they didn't comment.)

"Yes, Miss Potter," said Madam Bones firmly. "You are brought here under the charges of the attempted theft of a magical artifact, the attempted murder of-"

"I know the charges," Harriet interrupted. "I rather not hear them again," she said with a small smile. Madam Bones returned it, albeit hesitantly, and nodded, "Understood."

"Now, Miss Potter, why don't you start from the beginning?"

Harriet did. She told the court about how she had first met Fluffy and how they had figured out that the dog was guarding something. She described how they had made the connection with Nicholas Flamel ("I really did see him on a Chocolate Frog Card!" she insisted amidst chuckles). She described going through the trapdoor with Quirrel, his mistake with the potions, and, finally, her confrontation with Voldemort.

"He was there!" She protested, "on the back of Quirrel's head! He was there!"

"The Dark Lord isn't back!" Fudge roared, as the courtroom erupted into a frenzy.

"I'm not saying he's back," Harriet sighed, with the exasperated-ness that only a soon-to-be twelve year old could manage. She rolled her eyes for good measure. "At least, not of all him. Just his face, rather. And thats gone by now, too."

Madam Bones banged heavily on the stand with her gavel. They have those in Wizard Courts, too? Harriet mused.

"Alright, alright, alright." She said firmly. "Miss. Potter, we understand that you believe You-Know-Who to be back, but is it possible that you were mistaken?"

"You haven't been listening," she scowled, annoyed, forgetting all manners that Aunt Petunia had shoved down her throat when she was little. "He isn't back-"

"Yes, just his head-"

"-Actually it was his face-"

"-but is it possible you were mistaken?" Harriet gaped. Could she have been mistaken? She had stared into his eyes! She had felt his hands on her throat! He had tried to kill her in the forest! But obviously, nobody was going to believe that story. And she was far too young to be arrested.

"I guess so," she muttered quietly. Madam Bones nodded.

"Fudge, I find it highly unlikely that Miss Potter attempted to the steal the Stone. It is far more likely that Quirrel attempted to steal the Stone and Miss Potter's actions were simply self-defense. The trauma of the situation must have caused her to invent this ludicrous story of You-Know-Who's face. IAll in favor of dropping the charges, please raise your hands."

Harriet felt as though her heart was in her throat. She watched, not daring to blink, as hands slowly lifted into the air. That's more than half! She let out a giddy giggle as Madam Bones banged her gavel. "Case dismissed."

Harriet made to get up and embrace her parents, but she was stopped by Fudge's voice. "Wait! There is still the matter of Harriet's custody!"

"Harriet's what?" she echoed, settling back in the chair as an unnatural hush fell over the courtroom.

"Harriet's parents allowed her to get close to a potentially dangerous magical artifact! Had they kept a closer eye on her-"

"You can't seriously be suggesting," demanded Neville's grandmother, "that you separate Harriet from her parents so soon after they were reunited?"

"Under normal circumstances, a full investigation would be launched! We cannot neglect our duties simply because of their 'special' circumstances!" Fudge retorted smugly. Madam Bones seemed incapable of speech for a moment, before finally letting out a resigned sigh.

"He's right." Harriet saw her parents try to rise from their seats, but they were held down by Sirius and Remus. Ron was glaring at Fudge with all the muster he held in his twelve year old body. "In the interim, Miss Potter can reside with her godfather, Sirius Black-"

"An ex-convict who was just released from Azkaban! Hardly a good role-model!"

"Fine," said Madam Bones, too tired at this point to argue with Fudge's ridiculous demands. "Mr. Lupin is a good family friend-"

"And a registered lycanthrope!" snapped Fudge. Members of the courtroom who were friends with Remus hissed at Fudge.

"Then who would you recommend?"

"The Dursleys. Miss Potter lived with them for ten years. I'm sure she would be perfectly happy with them for a few months."

"Now wait just a moment-" Harriet's father cried, jumping up from his seat, as the ruling was passed. The courtroom seemed to be reigned with chaos from that point on. Reporters snapped pictures, Augusta Longbottom berated Fudge, Harriet's family protested vehemently. All Harriet could do, however, was sit in her seat and try not to cry.

So much for a great summer.

AN: So thats it for the first chapter of Harriet's second year! Is she really going to the Dursleys? Or maybe not? And whats Dobby been up to since we last saw him?

Please review!

tinyrose65



Harriet Potter, Potter Manor- June 10, 1992

"You can't let his happen!"

"She is not stepping foot in that house, even if I have to kidnap her myself!"

"Albus-"

"Augusta!"

"Can somebody please pass the sugar?" Harriet asked over the din of the room. For a moment, silence fell over them all, and Harriet relished it. The moment that her mother handed her the pot of sugar for her tea, however, the roar in the room rose again, pounding in her ears.

Harriet groaned and placed her head between her knees, not even bothering to try her tea. She wasn't in the mood for it anyways.

After the chaos of the trial, Harriet, her parents, Dumbledore, Augusta, Remus, Sirius, Ron, and Hermione had all returned to Harriet's house, which explained the particularly large amount of conversation. Harriet and her two friends were seated side-by-side on the couch as the adults argued and bickered and generally tried-but-failed to come up with a solution to their predicament.

"I still don't understand why you didn't prosecute them immediately," Neville's grandmother griped. "It would have saved us a lot of trouble."

Harriet's mum glared at her sharply. "We meant, too, but we were just so happy to get Harriet back. Then she went away to school and this whole Stone business started..." She trailed off. Augusta gave her a sympathetic pat on the arm.

"Don't worry, I am sure we can figure something out."

"If we don't, there's always Sirius's kidnapping idea," commented Remus drily from his position in the corner of the room. Sirius scowled at his schoolmate.

"Alright," he conceded after a moment, "not my best plan. But can you blame me for being a bit panicked?"

Harriet looked down at her tea as silence once again fell over the room. She hated causing people trouble- especially people she cared about so deeply. She bit her lip and glanced sideways at Ron and Hermione. Hermione was primly sipping her tea, while surreptitiously glancing at Harriet worriedly. Ron, on the other hand, was simply stuffing himself with the finger sandwiches that Harriet's mother had laid out.

"Maybe somebody could stay with her?" Lily suggested. "With a bit of charms work, we could make the house larger-"

"No contact between Harriet and the magical community is to occur over the during the investigation without Ministry approval."

"There goes that idea," James said, wringing his hands through his hair.

"I'm sorry," Augusta said, "but their ruling is sound. We have no grounds for a complaint."

"Of course we do! Those ba-" Sirius choked, recoiling under Lily's glare. "Ah, jerks treated her like sh- cra- garbage for ten fu- Blimey! This is hard!"

Dumbledore gave a sympathetic chuckle. "If we submit charges against the Dursleys, it will take at least a few weeks. As much as it pains me, for the time being, we have no choice but to send Harriet-"

"No!" Harriet's father protested, jumping up from his seat. "She is not going back to that place! Not for a few weeks, not for a days- not for a few minutes, damn it!"

"Its okay, dad," Harriet offered. Everybody turned their incredulous gazes at her.

"No," her father said after a minute. "It isn't 'okay.'"

Harriet sat up straighter, feeling just a tad insulted. "Why not? I lived there for ten years. I think I can handle a couple of weeks."

"No. You can't." He told her curtly. She scowled. "Why not?"

"Because." He muttered, tugging at his already messy hair."

"Because why?" she prodded, determined. If her staying at the Dursleys' was the easiest course of action, she wanted to know why her father was so against it. He turned around to face her and she could see that his eyes were slightly red.

"Because I promised you!"

Harriet blinked.

"We're sorry that you had to go live with them, but I promise that you will never have to go live with them again."

Harriet bit her lip. "It'll be okay, dad."

Her father didn't say anything, just continued his pacing. Augusta gave Ron and Hermione a look, ushering them out of the room, along with herself, Remus, Sirius, and Dumbledore. Harriet's parents both sat next to her, neither of them said a word.

She felt an arm wrap around her neck and leant into her father's embrace, shifting her position to allow herself to bury her face in his chest and wrap her arms around him, too. Her mother rubbed soothing circles on her back.

The three of them simply sat that way for a long time, each trying to accept the hand that fate had dealt them.

Harriet Potter, 4 Privet Drive Little Whinging, Surrey-June 12, 1992

"Thought we'd finally gotten rid of you."

Those were the first words Vernon Dursley sneered when Harriet stepped foot into his house a few days later.

Nothing has changed then. Harriet bit back a sigh and looked around. The foyer looked unchanged. She turned back around to look at her uncle, who was eyeing both her parents and their two friends with distaste as they entered the house.

"Let's make this quick," her father said firmly. "We don't want to be here. You don't want us here. But before we get started, we are going to get one thing straight: You will treat us with respect. If you so much as think the word "freak," we will hex you into oblivion."

Vernon grunted and led the four other adults into the kitchen for paperwork. Harriet was left standing awkwardly in the hall for a minute until her aunt emerged from the living room, wringing her hands.

"You'll be staying in Dudley's spare room," she told Harriet. Her voice just dared Harriet to protest these living arrangements. Harriet tried to put a thankful smile on her face, but it probably just came out as a grimace.

Harriet headed upstairs, taking two steps at a time. As she passed by Dudley's room, the door opened a crack and Dudley's beady eyes peered out. The moment he saw her, however, the door slammed shut. Harriet stifled a giggle and walked into her room for the next few months.

Back when Harriet had still lived with the Dursleys, this particular room had been Dudley's second bedroom. Any of Dudley's broken toys, forgotten books, and outdated video games were carelessly thrown into this room.

She could tell that the Dursleys had made some sort of attempt at clearing it up (no doubt afraid that Harriet would turn them into a balloon if she didn't), but the room was still a far cry from her room back home.

Better than a cupboard, she decided, dropping her rucksack on the cot that had been added to the center of the room. She recognized it as the same one she used to use in her cupboard, but it looked as though Aunt Petunia had cleaned it and thrown the sheets in the wash, along with some new bedding. She sat down heavily and let out a sigh. She had a feeling that she was going to be very lonely while she was here. They had managed to get Ministry approval for her to contact both the Weasleys and Hermione's family, but that was it. Any contact with her family would have to be made through them or unofficially with the help of the mirrors.

Harriet stood up and walked over to the window. She tried to open it, but it was a bit stuck. She gave it a hard tug and almost fell over backwards when it gave. Harriet stuck her head outside and looked around, making sure that Hedwig would have enough room to get out.

She shut the window and moved back to the center of the room, intent on tracking down her parents, but a small creak below her feet brought her to a standstill. She crouched downwards and lightly tapped the floorboard. Hearing a slightly hollow sound, Harriet began to try and pry it open. It took a few failed attempts, but, eventually, the floorboard opened loosely. She squeaked indignantly as she flew backwards, landing on her butt.

Crawling back up, she felt a smile spread across her face as she looked at the loose space she had uncovered.

Better not let the Dursleys see this, she resolved, running her hands over some of the corners to remove some of the cobwebs.

"Well, well, well!" Harriet jumped and looked up, breath caught in her throat. She let it out when she realized that it was just her parents: her aunt and uncle nowhere in sight.

"Good eye, Prongslette," her father congratulated. She smiled at him appreciatively as he squatted down next to her to help her put the floorboard back in place.

Her mother took out her shrunken bag and trunk from her pocket, placed them on the floor, and returned them to their normal size. She nodded, satisfied. "There."

Harriet's father took the opportunity to look around the room. "Not too shabby," he muttered. Harriet nodded in agreement. Harriet's mother sat down on the bed and gestured Harriet over to her. Harriet and her father followed.

"It will only be for a little bit, Harriet," her mum said. Harriet nodded, not sure if she was reassuring herself or Harriet. "You'll be home before you know it."

"We've talked to the Dursleys," her father took over, when he realized that his wife was having a hard time keeping herself

together, "and they've assured us that you will be treated with the utmost respect while you are here."

Harriet was skeptical, but decided that it was best not to say anything.

"Of course, if they don't, then you could always threaten to curse them," commented Sirius from the doorway. Remus, who was standing next to him and holding Hedwig's cage, shook his head exasperatedly.

"Underage wizards aren't allowed to use magic."

"Yes, thank you, Remus. I know that, but the Dursleys don't!"

Harriet's dad chuckled appreciatively, then grew somber. "We need to go."

Harriet nodded quietly, not really sure what to say. "Take care of Isaura for me?"

"Of course, love," her mother assured her. Harriet gladly let herself be wrapped up in a large hug.

They all gave their final farewells and, with a pop, were gone. Harriet sat down on the bed again.

The room was quiet, save Hedwig's soft hoots of comfort.

Harriet Potter, 4 Privet Drive Little Whinging, Surrey-June 29, 1992

Harriet had been at the Dursleys' house for a week. She had thought that, having lived with them for ten years, she would have very few problems now, but her short time with her parents, and then at Hogwarts, had spoiled her.

Her aunt, uncle, and cousin had all taken her magical items and stuffed them underneath the cupboard under the stairs. Harriet had managed to salvage her wand, her magical mirror, a Quidditch book, some paper, and a quill by stuffing everything under the floorboard (it had taken quite a bit of squeezing).

Poor Hedwig had been locked in her cage almost 'round the clock. The only way Harriet managed to stay in touch with the magical world was with her father's mirror. Ron and Hermione had been fantastic. Every time she called them, they were more than happy to insult the Dursleys with her.

She didn't tell them everything of course. She doubted that they would be happy to learn that she had taken up her old post as maid for the Dursleys.

Harriet stopped her work in the garden and took several deep breaths. The sun was beating down heavily on her and her back was aching from all the time she had spent crouched in the garden. When the Dursleys had assigned her this job, she had considered using magic to threaten Dudley to do it, but she decided that she should save that for another occasion.

She blinked, several times, to clear her vision. I must be going insane. That bush is staring at me.

Harriet glanced around furtively, before picking up her shovel and walking cautiously towards the bush. Two large, amber eyes stared back at her, unmoving. She went to take another step forward, but her Aunt's shrill voice called her inside.

She instinctively turned around, then, realizing that she shouldn't have taken her eyes off of the bush turned back around. The eyes were gone.

Imagining many different (and colorful) ways of killing her aunt and uncle, she trudged back to the kitchen. All three of her relatives were gathered there.

"You, girl," her uncle snapped as fiercely as he dared. Harriet raised an eyebrow at him to signify that he held her attention...or at least some of it. The rest of her attention was focused on Dudley's trousers, which were quickly slipping off of his fat bottom.

"Today," Harriet focused back on her uncle, "is a very important day in my career. This time next year, we could be vacationing in Florida."

"And by 'we' you mean 'you,' right?" Harriet clarified, although it was really unnecessary. "Not me."

Uncle Vernon bared his teeth and didn't bother to dignify her question with a proper answer. "While the Masons are here, I expect you to be in your room, understood? Even a peep out of you and you can forget about staying with us any longer. Are we clear?"

Harriet nodded, resisting the urge to tell him that she would do anything in the world (including making various "peep" related noises) if it meant that she no longer had to stay in this ridiculous household.

At her Uncle's nod of dismissal, Harriet raced up to her room and locked the door. She would no doubt be called back downstairs to help Aunt Petunia prepare dinner, but, for now, she could take the time to talk to Ron and Hermione.

She pulled her mirror out from the floorboard and softly called their names. It took a moment, but each of them eventually showed their faces.

"Harriet!" they chorused, making Harriet laugh as she greeted them.

"How are the Dursleys treating ya, mate?" Ron asked as he settled down on (what looked to be) his bed. Harriet shrugged.

"Not too badly. They haven't called me Freak once since I've been here, which is a definite improvement."

Hermione winced. "Is that really what they used to call you?"

Harriet opened her mouth to speak when some odd movement in the corner of the mirror caught her eye. It seemed that both of her friends noticed it, too, since they each brought the mirror closer to their faces.

"Did you see that?" she asked. Ron and Hermione both nodded. "What do you think it was?"

"Maybe some sort of glitch?" Ron questioned. Hermione nodded.



"We have been using the mirrors an awful lot, and they are very old. Maybe you should have your father look at them once you get home."

Harriet nodded, a small smile lighting up her face. She loved it when Ron or Hermione talked about her going home as if it were a definitive statement. It went unspoken, but the truth was, if the Ministry ruled against them, Harriet might never see her parents again. It wasn't very likely, but Harriet still felt a small knot of worry in her gut every time she thought about it.

"What are you doin' up in your room anyways, Harri?" Ron broke the silence. "Its a beautiful day...at least, over here at the Burrow."

Harriet snorted. "I just finished the gardening, Ron. You try spending three hours in that heat without a break. You'd want to spend your free time indoors, too."

"Blimey, Harriet," Ron winced. "They really work you over there, don't they?"

"Yea," Harriet acknowledged, "but keep it to yourselves, yea? The last thing we need is to go causing more trouble! If we keep a low profile, I might be back home in time before the summer is out!"

Hermione snorted. "Harriet, I love you, really I do, but let's be honest. You couldn't keep a low profile if you tried!"

"Can, too!" Harriet said petulantly. Hermione raised an eyebrow, but said nothing more. Ron stopped her before she could say anything else.

"Guess what?" he bombarded. Harriet blinked at his eager tone. "What?"

"Your family is coming over to the Burrow for dinner tonight. I reckon you could use the mirror and talk to them for a bit, yea?"

Harriet beamed. "That'd be brilliant!"

Her communication with her parents and two uncles had been limited to only a few letters. She missed them all dearly and couldn't wait for the day that she was finally back home. A voice from

downstairs caught her attention and, in the mirror, both Ron and Hermione made faces.

"Duty calls?" Hermione inquired.

"Yea," Harriet stuck out her tongue. Bidding both her friends goodbye, she packed away her magical possessions and made her way downstairs. Sure enough, her aunt was waiting (im)patiently for her, spatula in hand. Harriet took a deep breath, washed her hands thoroughly, and got to work.

Harriet had never been more grateful for the sound of a doorbell. Her aunt, wearing a truly horrid salmon colored cocktail dress, shooed her out of the kitchen, handing her a loaf of bread and hunk of cheese as dinner.

She took the stairs two at a time to get to her room, shutting the door gently behind her. Pulling out her mirror, she gratefully sunk into the bed and began to nibble on her food, waiting patiently for her parents to show up. She rolled her eyes as she heard Dudley's simpering voice ask the Masons for their coats.

"Harriet," came a soft voice. Harriet almost cried when she saw the faces of both her mother and father staring at her from the mirror.

"Hello!" she said softly, taking another bite of bread. Her father frowned.

"Enjoying dinner?"

Harriet shook her head. "Just a snack," she lied, smoothly.

Her father visibly relaxed. "Well, then, what have you been doing? Keeping yourself busy?"

Harriet nodded eagerly. "I've been spending a lot of time outside."

Not a totallie.

The fact that she was outside gardening and mowing the lawn was irrelevant.

Completely.

"That's good," Sirius chimed from somewhere behind her parents. Harriet giggled. He was now jumping up and down excitedly, waving his hands madly and trying to get into the shot. Harriet's mum chided him.

Harriet couldn't stop the loud guffaw that tore out of her. She could hear Dudley complimenting Mr. Mason by telling him all about a school report he had written. Seeing her parents's looks of confusion, Harriet hastened to explain the situation.

"Blimey," her father laughed. "I feel sorry for the Masons!"

"For once, I'm glad I'm up here," she admitted truthfully. "You should have seen the bow-tie Dudley had to wear."

"I'm glad I didn't," commented her mother drily, "since keeping a straight face has never really been my forte."

Harriet bit her lip to keep from laughing too hard. "I miss you," she said after a moment. Her mother's smile softened.

"We miss you, too, love," she said simply. "Don't worry, though, soon-"

Harriet's mum was cut off by a loud pop in Harriet's bedroom. Harriet's jaw dropped. "Merlin's beard."

"Harriet?" her father asked, suddenly concerned, "is everything alright?"

"Everything's fine," she said, her eyes not moving. "I've got to go, though. There's a house elf in my bedroom."

"Wait, what?" Cried her parents as Harriet muttered a quick "Love you," before disconnecting the mirror and placing it on the bed. The house-elf watched her quietly from its position near the door, its wide eyes fearful and awed. Hedwig hooted disapprovingly at his dirty pillow case, ruffling her pure, white feathers, warning the elf not to get her dirty.

"Hello," Harriet said, after some slight hesitation. The elf's bat-like ears flapped excitedly and he jumped up and down eagerly.

"Harriet Potter! Such an honor it is, little madam! Truly, an honor!"

"That's quite a compliment," she said in response, "especially considering the fact that I've never met you. What's your name, sir?"

"Sir?" The unnamed elf questioned. "Sir? Oh, Dobby has heard of your greatness, Harriet Potter, but never of your kindness!"

"Your name is Dobby, then?" Harriet clarified.

"Yes, miss," the little creature said, nodding so hard that Harriet was strongly reminded of one of those little bobble-heads that her Uncle Vernon used to keep in the car.

"Pleasure to meet you," Harriet offered. "Listen, though, now really isn't the greatest time to have a house-elf in my bedroom, so if you wouldn't mind coming back some other time, like, tomorrow, maybe. If it's no trouble!" Harriet hastened as the elf lowered his head.

"Dobby offers his apologies to Miss Potter, but his errand is urgent, and he worries that he will not have another chance to warn her!"

"Warn me?" Harriet asked, now confused. "About what?"

"There is danger," he whispered, eyes wide, grabbing his ears in terror. "A great danger has come to Hogwarts!"

"Right," Harriet sighed. This might take awhile. "Well, why don't you sit down and tell me a bit more?"

"Sit down!" Dobby wailed. Harriet's eyes widened. She could hear her uncle clamoring up the stairs and hastened to both apologize, shush, and shove Dobby in a closet all at the same time. She just managed to get the door closed when her Uncle barged in.

"What the devil are you doing in here?"

"Nothing," Harriet said quickly. She nudged the closet door closed with her foot when Dobby tried to open it. Vernon scowled at her.

"Really? Then whats that, then?" Harriet looked to where he was pointing. She winced. In her haste, she had forgotten to replace the floorboard and hide her mirror.

"Ah," was all she managed to say.

"I'll deal with you later," he hissed venomously, walking past her and grabbing both her mirror and the items stored in the small cubby. "Just keep quiet!"

He closed the door firmly behind him and Harriet let out a sigh. She opened the closet door and pulled Dobby out.

"Are you mental?" she snapped angrily. "Are you trying to get me killed?"

"Never!" Dobby assured her. "Dobby only meant to warn Harriet Potter!"

"Thats the second time you've said that," Harriet resigned herself to the fact that she was going to spend a good majority of her night talking to a house-elf.

Alright then.

"What exactly is it that you mean? Warn me about what? Whats happening at Hogwarts?"

"Bad things, Miss Potter," Dobby rasped. Harriet frowned.

"Could you be more specific?"

"No!" Dobby denied. Harriet made a shushing motion with her hands and calmed him down. When he spoke again, he spoke much more quietly. "Dobby's masters have forbidden him from speaking of it. Dobby will have to punish himself most gravely for coming to warn you."

"Right," Harriet said with a sigh, running a hand through her hair. House-elves really were treated unfairly. "Well, we can't have that, can we? What can you tell me?"

Dobby said nothing.

"What if I guess? Would that work?" Dobby nodded vigorously. Harriet set her jaw in concentration. "Does it have anything to do with Voldemort?"

Dobby squeaked and Harriet apologized. "No," Dobby said, looking a bit pale. "It does not have to do with He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named." Dobby's eyes were wide though. He seemed to be trying to give her a hint.

"Does he have a brother?" Dobby shook his head.

"Look," she said, finally, unable to think of anything else, "even if You-Know-Who was up to something, Hogwarts is still the safest place in all of Europe. Dumbledore is there...you have heard of Dumbledore, right?"

Dobby nodded. "Dumbledore is a great wizard, but there are things that even he does not understand. That no good wizard must know."

He said nothing else, so Harriet grumbled, annoyed. "Your masters really put you in a pickle, didn't they, Dobby?" Harriet's eyes brightened. "Can you tell me who they are? Maybe-"

But Dobby was already shaking his head. Harriet huffed. "They have something to do with this, though, right?"

Dobby nodded.

"Are you sure you can't say anything else?"

"Dobby is sorry, but he must obey his masters. He will say, however, that Harriet Potter must not return to Hogwarts this year. It is not safe."

Harriet shook her head. "No, Dobby. I have to go back. I need to get away from here. You've seen my Uncle! Whatever is waiting at Hogwarts can't be worse than him!"

"Oh, but it is," Dobby whispered darkly, pupils dilated. "So, Harriet Potter must promise Dobby that she will not return to Hogwarts!"

Harriet shook her head. "I can't do that, Dobby!"

"Then Dobby has no choice." Dobby popped out of her room and Harriet was left alone. She could hear her heart pounding in her chest as she pondered Dobby's words. What did that mean? She got her answer when she heard a light pop from downstairs, coming from what seemed to be the kitchen. Cursing her luck, Harriet crept downstairs as quietly as she could. She paused on the landing, crouched down to avoid being seen.

"Dobby?" she called out, hoping against hope that he would answer. He didn't, so she scowled and walked further into the house. She managed to sneak by the living room where her family was entertaining (well, not exactly) the poor Masons.

Sure enough, her instincts had been right. She found Dobby in the kitchen. He was levitating the cake that Aunt Petunia had so painstakingly prepared.

"Dobby," she demanded. He paused in his work to look at her. "As much as I would love to ruin Aunt Petunia's cake,- blimey, that thing is ugly- you can't! They'll be furious!"

"Harriet Potter must not return to Hogwarts!" He intoned, levitating the cake into the living room.

"But how is this going to help?" she demanded. Dobby just shook his head. Harriet, thinking quickly, darted into the living room, somehow ending up directly behind the Masons. Her uncle looked as though he were about to yell at her, but then he noticed the flying cake. His eyes widened and he seemed to choke on his words.

"Is everything alright?" came Mr. Mason's voice as Harriet's hands reached out, about to grab the cake.

"Dudley," gasped Aunt Petunia, frozen to the spot, "Isn't there something you wanted to tell the Masons?"

"Pudding," was all Dudley managed to squeak out. Harriet lunged for the cake, but it was no use: she was too late. The cake fell onto Mrs. Mason, and she screamed. Uncle Vernon tried desperately to calm them down, but apparently Mrs. Mason's suit had been one of a kind and handmade.

Mr. Mason's last words to Vernon were, "Just wait and see if my firm ever comes to your company for drills!"

Harriet winced as the door slammed shut. She caught Dobby's eye and he nodded firmly before disappearing. As she mindlessly tuned out her Uncle's angry rant, she couldn't help but worry for Dobby's mental health. How in the world was that going to keep me from going back to Hogwarts?

That was the moment that a small, brown owl chose to fly into the house through the chimney. That was also the moment that Harriet found herself recalling a conversation during which her parents had explained the concept of underage magic and the Trace.

And, as her uncle read out the letter informing her of her current suspension from Hogwarts and yet another impending hearing at the Ministry, that was when Harriet finally realized what Dobby's plan was all along.

Blimey, thats a smart elf.

Lily and the Marauders, Potter Manor- June 30, 1992

"Thats not possible," Lily repeated, sinking down on the couch and massaging her temples, frustrated. The Ministry official looked highly exasperated.

"Magic was used in that household," he repeated slowly, as if talking to a child (it made James want to punch him). "The only witch currently residing at that address is your daughter. A letter has been sent to her informing her of her current suspension from Hogwarts. She will attend another Ministry hearing in a few days to decide both her status as a student and your custody of her. What part of that was unclear?"

"The her using magic bit," Remus muttered. "She knows better."

The official shrugged, obviously at a loss. "I can't help you with that. Do you have any other questions?"

"Yes," Sirius acknowledged. "How will she be arriving at the Ministry?"



"A Ministry worker will be sent to pick her up. Now, I apologize, but I really must be going." Ignoring their protests, the workers departed from the house and left with a POP. Lily shook her head.

"Harriet wouldn't have used magic outside of Hogwarts. I am sure there is a perfectly logical explanation for this."

"What was it she said earlier? That there was a house-elf in her bedroom?" Remus questioned. Sirius frowned.

"Yes," he said, before adding drily, "and that's perfectly logical."

"Well," Lily sighed, "at least we'll never be bored, James."

Her husband snorted and said, jokingly, "You were the one who wanted kids. I still say we should have gotten the dog."

Harriet Potter, 4 Privet Drive, Little Whinging, Surrey- June 31, 1992

Harriet glared at her Aunt through the cat-flap when she shoved food inside. Grumbling to herself, she took the offered soup (Or what was supposed to be soup. Harriet doubted it, considering her Aunt's cooking.).

Eyeing the lumps of meat warily, she brought the bowl to her lips and took a sip. Convinced that it wasn't going to kill her immediately, Harriet finished gulping down the rest of the broth. She then took the remaining meat chunks and tipped them into Hedwig's cage.

"Enjoy," she told her owl. "It's all we'll be getting for a while."

Within hours of the Masons having left, the her Uncle had called a company to install bars on her windows and a cat-flap on her door. They had taken the rest of her magical items and thrown them back under the stairs. This time she hadn't been able to salvage anything, either.

Harriet flopped down onto the bed and sighed. Out of sheer boredom, she began to look at the stains patterns on the ceiling. She had just come to the conclusion that one of them looked suspiciously like a baby duck when her bedroom door open.

Harriet jerked up, hair sticking out in every direction. Her Uncle stood at the doorway. He was adjusting a rather ugly tie and looking very smug. "We are going out."

"We are?" Harriet asked, skeptical. It would seem that her Uncle had gotten much more lenient in his punishments since she had left. Her Uncle laughed at her. Loudly.

"Not you, girl," he snapped. "Petunia, Dudley, and I. We've won the first place prize in the England's Best Lawn Competition."

"And you aren't bringing me with you?" Harriet scoffed. "That seems a bit unfair considering I'm the one who did all the work on the lawn."

Her Uncle fixed her with an annoyed glare. The vein in his head was throbbing and his face was so red that it looked as though his head was about to explode. "Listen, girl, you'll be staying here. We're locking you in. Understand?"

"It's not any different from what you were doing before," Harriet pointed out, "so of course I understand. Unlike your son, I actually have a-"

Her uncle slammed the door shut on her.

"-brain," she finished with another sigh. She looked at Hedwig and made a face. "I must be ridiculously lonely if I'm talking to Uncle Vernon."

Hedwig hooted in reply.

"Fair enough," Harriet sighed, "but at least you're smart enough to understand me," Harriet noted. Hedwig puffed herself up in pride and Harriet giggled. She opened her mouth to chide Hedwig for being so proud, but a crash in the kitchen stopped her. She frowned.

"Didn't the Dursleys already leave?"

Hedwig cocked her head. "That's what I thought. Then who's down there?"

Hedwig hid her head in her wing and Harriet stuck her tongue out at her. "Some help you are!"

More noises on the stairs alerted Harriet that somebody was coming closer to her room. Lacking her wand, Harriet grabbed the first thing she thought of: the lamp from the small desk in the room. She lifted it up above her head and waited with baited breath as somebody opened the door.

Harriet had expected somebody rather devious and sinister looking. Instead, she got a slightly overweight, middle-aged man whose red hair was beginning to thin out-

Wait. Red hair...

"Mr. Weasley?" Harriet asked cautiously. Not every red head in the universe was a Weasley, of course, but this man had the perfect shade of Weasley Red and Harriet recognized Ron's nose in his sea of features.

"Yes," the man said excitedly, holding out his hand for her. Harriet placed the lamp back down on the desk and reached out to take it. "Arthur Weasley, Ron's father. You must be Harriet! Its a pleasure to meet you!"

"Its good to meet you, too, sir," Harriet said, politely. "If you don't mind my asking, what are you doing here? I don't mean to sound ungrateful to see you, or anything, but this is the second time tonight I've had somebody unexpectedly pop into my bedroom."

"If you don't mind, I think I'd like to hear a bit more about that," he told her, brows furrowed in a way that reminded Harriet of Percy's "serious face."

"However, to answer your first question, I am here to escort you to my home for the night, where you will remain under my supervision until your Ministry hearing tomorrow." He said this all in dry tone, informing her that this was simply the official wording.

"Your home, Mr. Weasley?"

"Yes, Miss Potter," he responded, teasing her for her formality. "The Ministry believes that due to your exhibition of underage magic earlier-"

"That wasn't me!" Harriet denied.

"No?" Mr. Weasley frowned. "Then I guess you really must tell me that story-sooner, rather than later, if you don't mind. But, no matter. The Ministry still feels that you must be placed under some sort of magical supervision. They chose me."

"But Ron said that you worked for the Misuse of Muggle Artifacts department? What does that have to do with me?" Harriet was very confused. Mr. Weasley beamed at her, obviously very excited about his work.

"I pulled a few strings. Talked to the right people. Thought it might ease your parents' minds." Harriet nodded, things making more sense. "Although, I was also hoping that I might have a chance to question you on some of the more obscure muggle objects that I've come into contact with. Maybe clear up any confusion-"

"Absolutely," Harriet said quickly. Anything to get out of the Dursley's house. "I would be happy to."

"Brilliant!" He told her. "We'll just need to get your things, then."

"They're downstairs, in the cupboard underneath the stairs."

"Everything?" questioned Mr. Weasley in a rather dubious tone. Harriet answered, "Yes, sir. Everything but Hedwig."

She picked up the cage which held the owl in question. Mr. Weasley's eyes narrowed as he took in the padlocked cage and Hedwig's agitated expression. His eyes flicked around the room, taking notice of the threadbare mattress, bars on the window, the food tray, and the cat-flap. His lips tightened, but, thankfully, he didn't say a word. Instead, he just ushered her quickly out the door.

It was with a grateful sigh that Harriet took her wand from him when he unlocked the door that lead to Harriet's things. He began to shrink down her drunk and various other items. Harriet decided to try and make conversation. It was Ron's dad, after all.

"Its lucky you got here when you did," she offered. "The Dursleys just left. Something about winning an award."

"Oh that wasn't luck," Mr. Weasley denied. "I fabricated that little story. Needed something to get them out of the house."

Harriet laughed. "Oh! I'd love to see their faces when they realize that the prize doesn't exist!"

Mr. Weasley smiled with her. "We're all set then. I just need to leave them a note. Something to tell you that you've gone-

"They'll be thrilled."

"-that you're perfectly safe-

"That will just depress them."

"-and that if they wish to see you, all they need to do is ask."

"I really doubt they'll take you up on that."

"From what I've heard," Mr. Weasley admitted, "so do I. But it's a formality." Harriet sighed in concession and managed to dig up a notepad and a pen. Mr. Weasley had the time of his life clicking the little ball-point pen on and off, apparently having only used quills, and, once he was done, Harriet just couldn't find the heart to take it from him, so she let him keep it.

The Dursleys wouldn't miss it, she decided. Then, taking in Mr. Weasley's thrilled expression, And they can go splinch themselves if they do.

"Are we going to apparate to your house?" Harriet was a bit hesitant. Apparation wasn't her favorite mode of transportation. Mr. Weasley nodded apologetically. Obviously he agreed with Harriet that it wasn't the greatest way to travel.

"Mind you," he told her as they walked outside, "Muggles have some very interesting ways of getting around. Very ingenious."

"What?" Harriet asked. "Like cars?"

Mr. Weasley nodded. "Exactly!" Harriet hadn't thought of it that way before. "If only the Ministry wasn't so anti-Muggle. So many

improvements could be made using their ideas! You should see some of the things I've done so far-

"But I thought modifying Muggle stuff was illegal?"

"I think you'll find," he told her, nervously tugging at his collar, "that there is a loophole in the bill. Making modifications are perfectly legal, as long as you aren't intending to use the object in question."

"Percy mentioned once that you were the one who drafted the bill," Harriet began cautiously. In the moonlight, she saw Mr. Weasley turn as red as his hair. She grinned. "Did you do that on purpose?"

"We really need to be going," Mr. Weasley said loudly as he changed the subject. That gave Harriet all the answer she needed. It also gave her all the trust she needed to take his offered arm and go off with him to the Burrow.

Harriet Potter, The Burrow- June 31, 1992

The Burrow, Harriet decided, was quite possibly Harriet's favorite place in the world-save her own home and, of course, Hogwarts. The house itself was large, but not in width. It was actually rather narrow, as though it had started out as nothing more than a small hut. Other rooms seemed to have been tacked on, as though mere afterthoughts. The house towered above them, several stories high. It looked as though it were about to fall over, reminding Harriet of a magical version of the Leaning Tower of Pisa.

The interior was just as wacky as the outside. The furniture was eclectic and old, much of it worn down and faded. The rooms were filled with magical knick-knacks that Harriet had never seen before. Overall, the Burrow had a homey feel to it that fit well with Ron's descriptions of his family.

Ron's family.

If there was anything that Harriet liked more than the house itself it was the people in the house. The Weasleys had to be some of the nicest people she had ever met. Mr. Weasley had kept his word. The moment they arrived home, he had been off again, this time flooing to her house to inform her parents of her safe arrival.

Mrs. Weasley was just as she had remembered: red-haired and motherly. She had offered Harriet food right away and, Harriet almost felt ashamed to admit it, it was just as good (if not better) than her own mother's cooking.

Percy had been formal and respectful to her, but oddly cold. That was just his way, she supposed.

The twins were the exact opposite, welcoming her with open arms and making her instantly feel like one of the family. They treated pranks as though they were important as breathing. She couldn't go five minutes in their presence without laughing hysterically.

Ron's little sister Ginny, with whom she was sharing a room, seemed sweet, although it was difficult to tell since she would blush and run away whenever Harriet entered the room. It was flattering, but a tad disconcerting.

Not nearly as disconcerting, of course, as the other Ministry hearing hanging over her head. Mr. Weasley, having heard her tale about Dobby, had assured Harriet that everything would work out fine.

Considering how well her last Ministry hearing had gone, Harriet was a little bit less optimistic.

To cheer her up, Fred and George threw a small show using their left-over Fillibuster Fireworks. Harriet loved it, but, sadly, Mrs. Weasley wasn't as grateful. She chased them both around the house with her wooden spoon before ordering them to go de-gnome the garden. Harriet had felt bad, but the winks they both sent her behind their mother's back made her feel a bit better.

Harriet couldn't help but turn to Ron, incredulous. He laughed at her expression. "Yea," he assure her, "its always like this. Well, except for Ginny. Normally, she can't shut up. Its a bit weird."

Harriet blushed and mumbled something, incoherent. Mrs. Weasley took this moment to enter the living room.

"Its late," she tutted. "Harriet, you have a long day ahead of you, my dear. Its time you headed up to bed."

Harriet gave Ron a quiet goodnight and headed up to Ginny's bedroom. Ginny was already there, but Harriet didn't bother trying to strike up conversation with her. Instead, she changed into her jim-jams, got under the covers, and turned off the light, and went to sleep hoping that the next day brought better things.

Harriet Potter, Courtroom 10, Ministry of Magic-July 1, 1992

"It wasn't me," Harriet said the moment she was on the stand. Fudge raised a dubious eyebrow and scoffed.

"Then who was it?"

"The house-elf," Harriet said matter-of-factly. Fudge decided to humor her.

"I see." He nodded sagely. "What exactly was this house-elf's name?"

"I..don't remember," Harriet muttered, thinking of Dobby's fear filled gazed and secretive nature.

"And what did he, or she, want, exactly?"

"I don't really know. I think he was trying to warn me."

"From what?"

Harriet shrugged and Fudge snorted again. Madam Bones looked highly put out at having her proceedings having been taken from her, but there was little she could do against the Minister at this point.

"I see," he sighed, giving her parents disappointed looks, as if he thought that they should be ashamed of their child's blatant lying. "Well, Miss. Potter, unless you can give us a plausible explanation-"

"Minister Fudge," interrupted Madam Bones, "Miss Potter may not be being entirely truthful with us, she is not lying about not being the one to cast a levitation charm."

Fudge gaped at her, so she continued. "A quick check of the last spell used on Miss Potter's wand has confirmed that she was not the one to cast a levitation charm."



"That- That can't-"

"Furthermore," Madam Bones continued, "an investigation has confirmed that Mr. and Mrs. Potter are perfectly suitable parents, so there is no need for Miss Potter to return to the Dursleys."

"She can't-" Fudge wailed. Madam Bones fixed him with an annoyed look.

"Minister Fudge, unless you have something useful to say, than I suggest you hush down. This hearing is now over."

Harriet was over to her parents in a flash. This hearing had gone much better (and much faster) than the last hearing she had attended. Her father picked her up, spinning her around rapidly and planting kisses in her hair. She was then passed over to her mother, who just held her tight. Sirius and Remus each gave her welcoming hugs as well.

Harriet was eventually set down. "Hello," she said, not really sure what else to say.

"Hello, Prongslette," Sirius retorted, ruffling her hair. She half-heartedly scowled at him.

"Can we leave?" she asked hopefully.

"Just need to fill out some paperwork, love," her mother admitted. Harriet couldn't help but make a face. "But why doesn't your father go ahead and show you where he and the other aurors work while we wait?"

Her father looked at her eagerly and she couldn't say no. They began to walk together down the corridor and towards the lift. Neither of them said anything and that was what allowed them to hear the hushed whispers coming from down the hall.

Harriet and her father exchanged glances.

"Fudge?" he mouthed. Harriet nodded and identified the second voice.

"Malfoy?" she mouthed back. He raised an eyebrow and gestured for her to act natural. Straightening, they walked in the direction of the voices.

"I simply worry, Fudge," came Malfoy Sr.'s silky drawl, "about the safety of the students. Of my son."

"Of course," Fudge stammered. They came into view and Harriet watched as Malfoy pressed something-money-into Fudge's hands.

"Hello," her father said, casually. "Are we interrupting something."

Fudge paled, but Malfoy looked unconcerned. "Of course not, Mr. Potter. Fudge was just sharing with me the wonderful news about your daughter. I am glad to hear that your family is back together. I'm sure my cousin is pleased."

"Cousin-in-law," her father corrected idly. "And yes. He is. We all are. We appreciate your congratulations."

"You best be careful, though," he warned. "From what I hear, your daughter seems to be keen to keep up your tradition of making trouble."

"I'll keep that in mind," he said, coolly. Malfoy smirked and inclined his head, walking away. Fudge looked at the Potters nervously, then teetered after Malfoy.

Both Harriet and her father stood there for a minute, each trying to figure out what had just happened. Finally her father sighed and gave her a rueful smile.

"Listen, Harriet, about what we just did? Sneaking up on Malfoy and Fudge?" Harriet nodded. "Don't tell your mother."

Sorry that this took so long! I don't really have an excuse...

Still, I appreciate the support!

I hope you enjoy and reviews are good for you!

tinyrose65

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